IN DEFENSE OF CULTURAL STUDIES

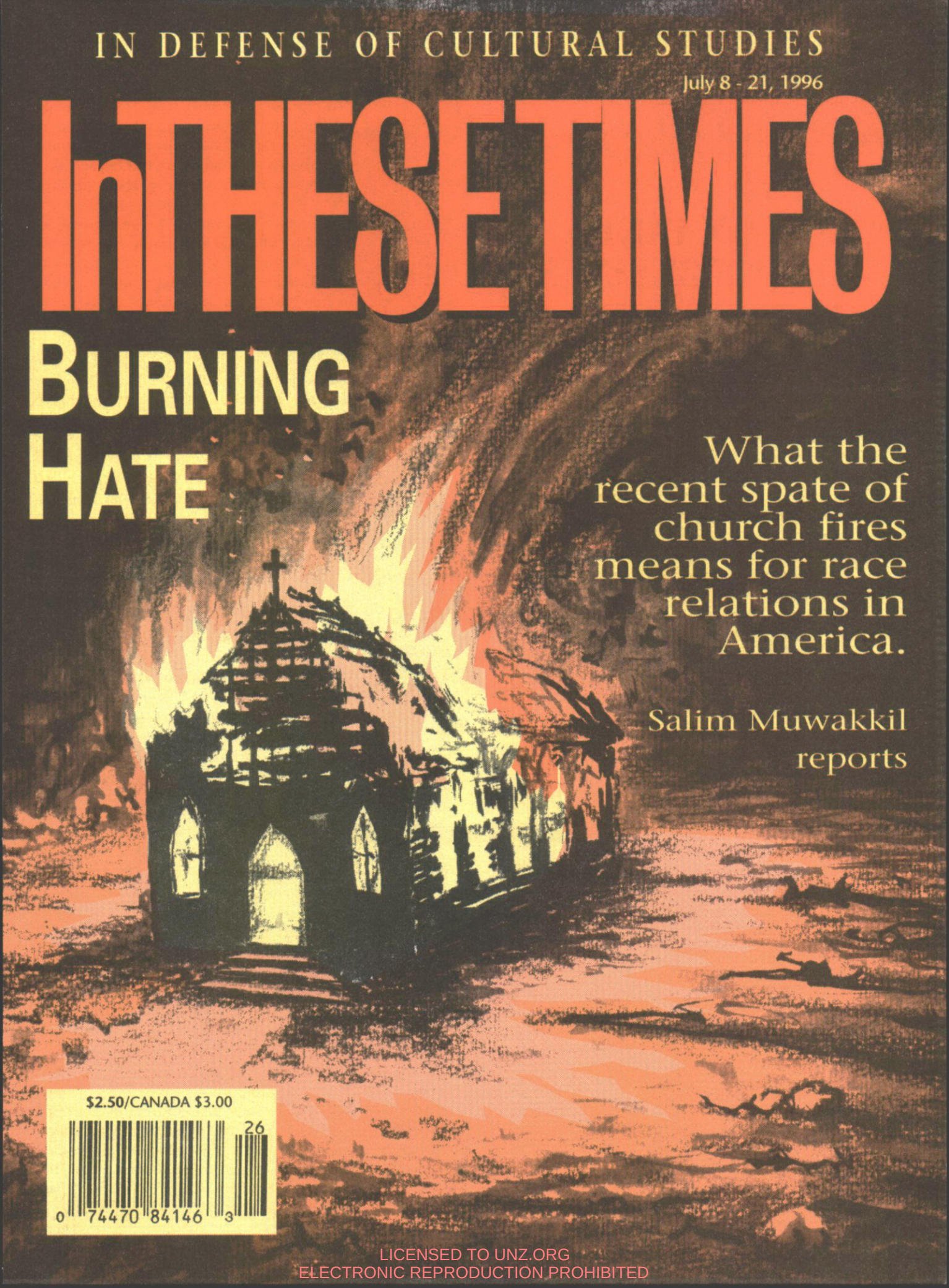
July 8 - 21, 1996

In THESE TIMES

BURNING HATE

What the recent spate of church fires means for race relations in America.

Salim Muwakkil reports



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EDITORIAL

CLINTON TAKES CARE OF BUSINESS

In 1992, fewer than 40 percent of eligible voters cast a ballot for president, and even among those who voted Democrat or Republican (almost 20 percent of those who voted chose Ross Perot), a majority didn't like their party's candidate. Now, with Bob Dole struggling valiantly to shed the image of the Gingrich "revolution," Clinton seems impervious to the steady drumbeat of petty scandals surrounding his administration and his old friends. With a comfortable and stable lead in the polls, Clinton presents the strange phenomenon of a man thoroughly disliked and distrusted by the people who are almost certain to vote him back for a second term.

This has many pundits puzzled, but it's not difficult to understand. In each of the several recent presidential elections, the number of people who voted against—rather than for—a candidate has risen. And in 1992 as today, the reasons for voting against the Republican candidate are significantly stronger than the reasons for voting against Clinton.

In 1992 and again this year, Clinton has pursued a two-part electoral strategy. First, he has tried to move as close to the Republicans as he can by pandering to the biases and prejudices of the shrunken electorate. In 1992, for example, he insulted the Democrats' largest natural constituency by criticizing Sister Souljah at a meeting sponsored by Jesse Jackson. This year he has dissed the gay and lesbian community by announcing that he was going to San Francisco to oppose same-sex marriages.

But there is some danger in such tactics, and Clinton has had to throw some bones to the Democrats' core constituents as well. If they stay away from the polls, the electorate could drop well below 40 percent—and the smaller the number of voters, the better the Republicans' prospects. Thus, while the Republicans get more deeply enmeshed in angry debates over abortion, Clinton has been a consistent supporter of choice. And he has spoken out strongly against the black church burnings that have plagued the South this past year, demonstrating concern for African-Americans while safely appealing to all Americans' sense of fairness and justice.

In his campaign mode, the president has rediscovered commitment to working people; labor, with no other partner on the scene, is eager to dance.

Now, too, he is once again the friend of working people. Speaking to the convention of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees in Chicago last month, the president boasted about the creation of 9.7 million new jobs since he took office, and of his support for an increase in the minimum wage and health care reform. "I say we should stand up for the notion that America will be stronger in the global economy of the 21st century," he said, "if we give our people clean air, clean water, safe streets, a solid education system ... and if we decide we're going forward together."

Clinton's remarks received a standing ovation from his union audience, along with cries for "four more years." And, of course, there was reason to cheer his words, empty as they may be. But it would be a good idea for the labor movement to consider: four more years of what? Clinton now appears as a champion of a higher minimum wage, but in his first two years of office, when he had a Democratic majority in both houses of Congress, he never mentioned the issue. He became interested only when polls showed that almost 80 percent of Americans favored an increase—and when the Republicans in control of Congress came out against it.

Then, too, Clinton's health care plan was written by the giant insurance companies that are now pushing the health care market toward HMOs. His plan, disastrously bureaucratic and doomed to failure, set the health care reform movement back at least a decade. Similarly, Clinton has accepted cuts in spending for the environment and education while supporting Cold War levels of military spending. And he pushed NAFTA through a reluctant Congress despite labor's desperate efforts against it, thereby accelerating job loss, environmental degradation and the destruction of the Mexican economy.

In this presidential election, labor, like the rest of us, has no alternative to Clinton. But blind support won't do the unions or the working people they represent much good, especially because a re-elected Clinton will be a lame duck with no need to pander to labor for support in the year 2000. With $35 million to spend on the 1996 elections, and with thousands of active members regaining an interest in politics, it would make more sense for the unions to concentrate on electing genuinely pro-labor candidates to Congress. They can have some real influence in that effort, and whether or not Clinton is re-elected, the left would then have a larger voice in national affairs—and a base on which to build for the next century. ◀

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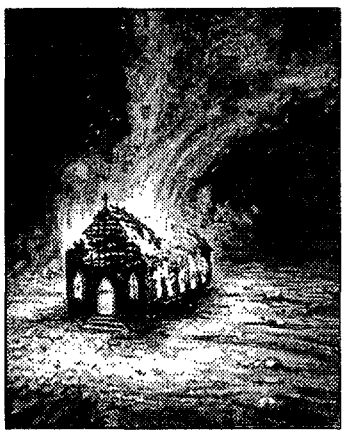
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LETTERS

Sectarian

I am sorry to see *In These Times* provide such one-sided coverage of the Sokal hoax and proceed to bash the academic left in a neoconservative manner. I thought that *In These Times* meant to avoid the past errors of the sectarian left, but the defense of Sokal is entirely sectarian. Tom Frank's article ("Textual reckoning," May 27) takes Sokal's point of view as gospel truth. For example, Frank considers Sokal's essay an obvious hoax: "Plausible enough on the surface ... it is spotted as a hoax immediately by those who are more skeptical of the magazine's mission." Here Frank restates Sokal's belief not only that skeptics will spot the essay as an "obvious hoax" but that theory itself is a matter of jargon, insiders' beliefs, generic conventions, etc.

This reasoning is entirely circular: Anyone who dismisses the theory will find the article a hoax not because it is so obviously ridiculous but because they dismiss the theory. To illustrate this obvious ridiculousness, Frank cites the claim that "society is prior to physical reality." Here again Frank echoes Sokal, who considers this claim an obvious absurdity. Actually the claim is a reductive but conventional way to characterize cultural theory, which does say that how we talk about society or nature governs how we think about society or nature. The claim is reductive because it (like Sokal) ignores the restraints imposed by logic or critical analysis; the claim is also conventional—try talking about science without mentioning pi mesons, muons, half-life, or some other scientific jargon, and scientists consider you uninformed, if not idiotic. Why doesn't *In These Times* publish any critiques of this jargon?

The answer comes from James Weinstein's editorial, which restates all of Jacoby's and the neocons' conventional wisdom about the academic left—it speaks an unintelligible jargon; it talks mainly to itself; the failure of left politics explains why it has retreated from society; and, pursuing only "private careers and academic honors," it is entirely self-serving. One would think that we on the academic left do no teaching, that it really does not matter whether left-wingers or right-wingers teach American youth (more than 50 percent of which attend college) or the teachers of elementary, junior high and high school students, and that all of the academic left are chaired professors at Harvard, Yale or Princeton—and not at state universities or small private colleges with heavy workloads and shrinking budgets.

Weinstein, who talks about the academic left's "elite enclaves," forgets—or may simply not care—that, armed with this neocon viewpoint, state legislators are slashing university budgets and student financial aid, and administrators are destroying programs, firing tenured faculty and raising students' tuition. With corporate downsizing and the vast technological revolution, more American youth need a college education than ever before. Even President Clinton is trying to make the first two years of college available to everyone. Weinstein recommends, however, that we academic leftists forget about teaching and our other "self-serving" professional activities and "start thinking about the needs of the world outside." He forgets that the world outside is inside, too. The core idea of the new cultural theory is not that "beliefs and intellectual constructs ... can be

SYLVIA — by Nicole Hollander



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understood and evaluated only in the times and social conditions in which they develop"; the key idea is that you can't really distinguish the past and the present, the inside and the outside, text and society so neatly.

Philip Goldstein
Newark, Del.

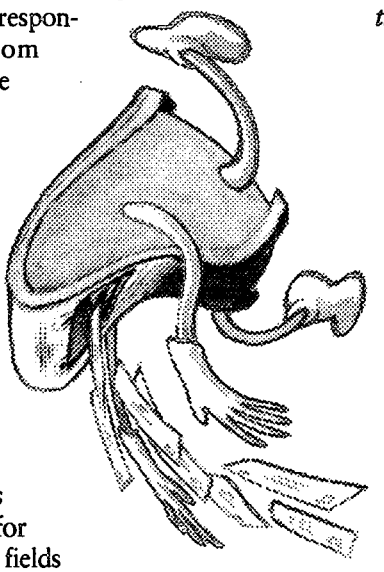
*Tom Frank replies: Who's being one-sided here? In addition to Sokal, I quoted approvingly from pro-*Social Text *sources like Andrew Ross and an editor of* Critical Inquiry. *And in fact Sokal's article meets all the criteria of a classic prank, one of which is that it must sound reasonable enough to be published by one group and yet satirical (or "obvious") to those on the outside. Of course, all that's moot after the prank has been performed, but its success hardly rules it out as a prank. As for "obviousness," I take this to be perfectly demonstrated by the article's ridiculous final footnote, if not by the amused reaction of virtually every single person (yes, they were academics) that I talked to who had read it.*

Serving the devil

I continue to be taken aback by your repeated attacks on cultural studies, several of which, I must point out, seem to stem from *LinguaFranca*, a magazine widely perceived among academic leftists (a community to which few of your writers belong) as profoundly reactionary.

One rarely sees left academics attacking progressive non-academics as "absurd" or "silly" or calling them "pseudo-populists" or "pseudo-dissidents"—all of which occur in your irresponsible encomium of Alan Sokal. Why not show us the same courtesy?

The fact that it might take several years of graduate school to understand what cultural studies is getting at should upset or surprise no one, least of all progressives with at least some familiarity with the long history of Marxist theorizing. Surely it does not count for Sokal as a mark against physics that it takes many years of study to understand it. But because cultural theorists are writing about issues that concern all of us, it is routinely assumed that what they say must be easily understandable to all of us. That is plainly false on reflection. Sokal himself admits that he doesn't understand most of cultural studies. That should have been enough to stop him, as a responsible leftist, from going on the offensive.



Sokal's main point seems to be that because cultural studies can be fooled by a hoax like his, it is flawed to the core. We're lucky that he's pointed this out for us, since his own fields (physics in particular and science in general) have *never* been taken in by hoaxes—and if you believe that, I've got a cold fusion generator-powered Piltdown Man exhibit that I'd love to sell you.

The academic left and the non-academic left are on the same side. Their motives and interests are largely the same. Contempt for the academic left by non-academics ultimately serves (and, arguably, has been produced by) conservative interests much more than it does progressive ones. I sincerely hope you will consider that sense of alliance more generously before you decide to join in the next go-round of attacks on cultural studies.

David Golumbia
New York City

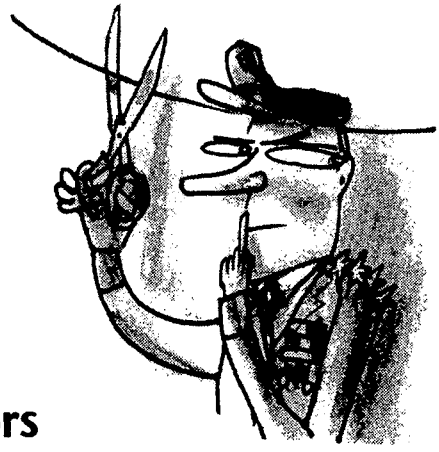
Editor's note: The question that concerns us most is not who teaches the more than 50 percent of American youth who attend college, but what they are taught. Of course, if we could have our druthers, we'd choose to have people with a left perspective teaching our college students. But more important than that is to have teachers who will prepare students to participate in public life as active citizens in a democratic society. To do so, they must learn to think clearly and critically about the world in which they live. We did not intend to suggest that teachers should "forget about teaching," as Philip Goldstein asserts, but only that they should orient the thinking that guides their teaching to the needs of the world outside.

Both Goldstein and David Golumbia criticize Alan Sokal for not seeing that his field of physics, and science in general, has its own jargon and has also been the victim of hoaxes. True, science in general, and physics in particular, has jargon that is unintelligible to most people. But there is an obvious difference between science and poststructuralism. While we may not understand the jargon of physics, we can see and evaluate what physicists produce, whether it be computers or atomic bombs. Therefore, we can assume that scientists' use of a language of their own serves a social purpose. But poststructuralism claims to deal with issues that concern us all, yet what they contribute remains a carefully guarded mystery. Indeed, the only poststructuralist contribution we can think of is an enhancement of the particularist tendencies inherent in identity politics. And that has had a negative impact on an already disoriented left.

Further, while we agree that the past exists in the present and the present in the past, we believe that the point of studying and understanding this relationship is to enable us to act more intelligently in the present. The urgency to do so seems absent in these responses to Tom Frank's article and to our editorial.

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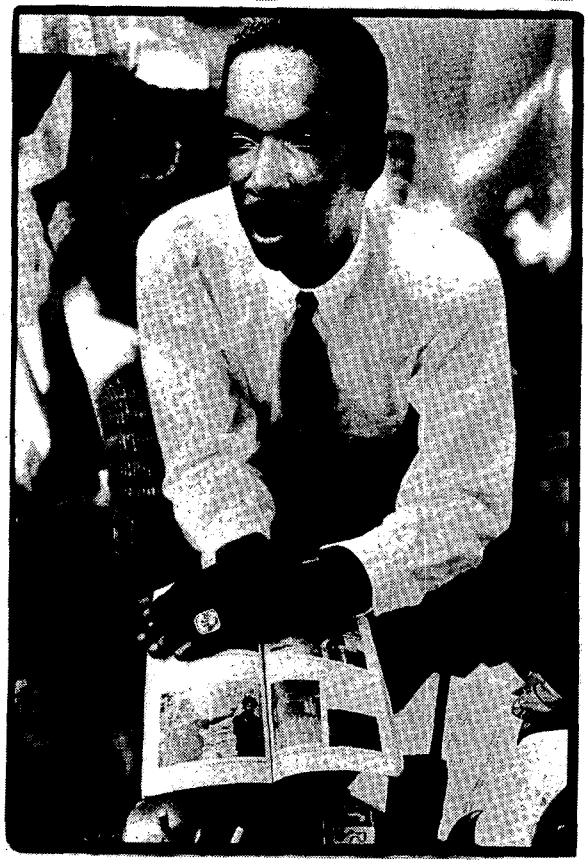
InSHORT



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Cyber warriors

THE PENTAGON IS GIRDING ITSELF TO WAGE ELECTRONIC WAR. Robert Parry reports in *The Consortium* that the Defense Department has put out a 13-page booklet, "Information Warfare for Dummies." According to this instruction manual, the battlefield objective in this Information War (IW) is to "Destroy (or weaken) the bad guy's system and protect your own." The pamphlet goes on to explain: "Assault technologies for the Information Warrior can be divided into 'hard kill,' involving physical destruction, and 'soft kill,' where the goal is electronic or psychological disruption. ... Their commonality lies in their emphatic focus on information—destroying it, corrupting it, and denying it." Government sources told Parry that the CIA is already in virtual trenches, fighting a cyber war against Latin American drug lords by electronically entering bank records and deleting money. Don't expect this new warfare technology to be proclaimed from the Pentagon rooftop. The handbook explains: "Due to the moral, ethical and legal questions raised by hacking, the military likes to keep a low profile on this issue." To subscribe to *The Consortium* call 1-800-738-1812. —**Joel Bleifuss**



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GETTING AWAY WITH MURDER IN HAITI

Emmanuel Constant, the notorious leader of Haiti's death squads who is wanted in connection with hundreds of human rights violations, was released by the United States on June 14 from a Maryland detention center where he had been awaiting deportation for more than a year. Constant fled to the United States shortly after the U.S.-led invasion of Haiti in September 1994 and was arrested here after his tourist visa was revoked. He withdrew his appeal of deportation in December of last year, and under U.S. immigration law he was due to be deported by June 13. Instead, in a startling reversal, the Department of Justice released him provisionally under a secret deal, while reserving the option to deport him at a later date. Constant is now living with his mother in New York City.

On October 4, 1994, shortly after the invasion of Haiti, American troops raided the Port-au-Prince headquarters of the FRAPH death squads, confiscating weapons, more than 60,000 compromising FRAPH documents and another 100,000 Haitian army documents. (See "Constant companion," February 6.) No action was taken against Constant or the military chiefs, who were instead escorted to comfortable exile in Panama and the Dominican Republic.

After Constant was jailed in the United States, he apparently decided to retaliate against his erstwhile allies. In a television interview from his jail cell, Constant announced to the American public that throughout his reign of terror he had been employed by the CIA, which had sponsored his rise to power and even suggested to him that he form the FRAPH. CBS' *60 Minutes* presented Ed Bradley's exclusive interview with Constant as if it were a scoop, but the story was actually old news: *The Nation* had reported on Constant's CIA connections more than a year earlier, and the *New York Times* reported in October 1993 that the other top guns of the junta, Lt. Gen. Raoul Cédras and police chief Joseph Michel François, were them-

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APPALL-O-METER

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By David Futrelle

Bleached whales 3.2

Spotted on a Chicago el train: A well-meaning but perhaps infelicitously designed poster put up by the Environmental Law and Policy Center, featuring colorful photographs of a crashing ocean wave, a field of daisies and a lush green forest. "Bluer Blues, Whiter Whites, Greener Greens," the ad's text reads. "Doesn't the environment deserve the same treatment as your laundry?" Perhaps, though most animals and plants don't respond quite as well as underwear to detergents and chlorine bleach.



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Scarlett fever 4.4

When foreign visitors arrive in Atlanta—and some 2 million are expected to arrive for the Olympics—they seem to want to see the Old South rather than the New, the *Wall Street Journal* reports. That's good news for Melly Meadows, a canny Georgia entrepreneur who has turned her resemblance to Vivien Leigh—aka Scarlett O'Hara—into a money-making asset, attending dinners and functions in full Scarlett regalia for up to $500 an hour. At the moment, the *Journal* notes, she's so swamped with requests for her services that she's had to recruit her sister as a backup Scarlett, and to hire two other faux-Scarletts besides. "[I]t is her Scarlett-like talent for putting the brightest spin on the South's bleakest history that keeps customers happy," the *Journal* notes. "When an elementary school child asks her how many battles the South won in the Civil War, she notes that, 'unfortunately, the South didn't win many of the battles. And overall, the South lost. But we got the Olympics.'"

Money changes everything 7.6

Watts resident Alma Reaves Woods has worked for some four decades to promote literacy in her community, and has been such a tireless advocate for a new branch library that she's known around the neighborhood as "the lady who built the library." Now that the library is built, you might imagine that the city would feel enough gratitude to name the library after her. Well, no. Despite the support Wood has gotten from the community, the City of Los Angeles says it can't even consider naming the facility after her, the *Los Angeles Times* reports. A policy promoted by Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan reserves such honors for those who donate a million dollars to the city. And there aren't too many in Watts—Woods included—who can cough up that kind of dough.

selves CIA employees.

Since Constant, the FRAPH and the army have been accused of thousands of murders and other crimes, the confiscated documents are of vital interest to Haitians and co-workers of the Haitian judicial system. The documents could reveal responsibility for individual crimes, as well as criminal chain-of-command. They reportedly contain information such as membership lists of the FRAPH death squads; locations of arms caches still hidden in the Haitian countryside; orders for FRAPH and army raids on neighborhoods; correspondence between military strongmen and their supporters; and, probably, records of financial transactions for the procurement of weapons and ammunition that could reveal the sources of unmarked shipments from Miami that Constant regularly received during the embargo.

Despite repeated requests by the Haitian government, the documents and photos have still not been returned to the Haitian government. The American Embassy in Port-au-Prince recently proposed to return an edited version of the remaining documents, with the names of U.S. citizens blacked out. This would conceal the extent of reported CIA relations with Constant, the FRAPH and the Haitian army, and would also protect coup criminals with dual nationality.

The U.S. government's reluctance to release the documents suggests it has a great deal to hide. Washington's decision to release Constant likewise suggests it was cowed by fear of what Constant might reveal to the press if he were deported back to Haiti. To withhold the FRAPH and army documents, and now to make a deal that allows Constant to remain in the United States, runs contrary to American ideals of democracy and justice. By its actions, the United States is helping Haiti's worst human rights abusers to, quite literally, get away with murder.

—Catherine Orenstein

TWO-MINUTE WARNING

This May, Texaco shareholders gave Sen. Dr. Isauro Puente, head of Ecuador's Congressional Environmental Commission, just two minutes to outline a plan for a complete cleanup of Texaco's former oil fields in the Ecuadorian Amazon. In 1990, two years before Texaco's 20-year concession was due to expire, the oil giant turned over its oil-pumping facilities to Petroecuador, the state-run oil company. But at the Texaco shareholders' meeting in Houston last month, Puente faced the company's continued unwillingness to endeavor a cleanup. "The idea was to go to shareholders, for them to realize the magnitude of the problems," he said. "We have put together a total plan. ... With two minutes it was impossible to discuss the plan."

For a generation, Texaco, the third-largest American oil company, pumped

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billions of barrels of crude oil from the Oriente province of the Ecuadorian Amazon. When it started production, Texaco made the critical decision not to reinject toxic wastes into the ground. Instead, the company let them sit in open pits, which then leaked into the environment. By the time Texaco handed its Oriente drilling operations to Petroecuador, it had left nearly 17 million gallons of spilled oil, discharged more than 20 billion gallons of toxic wastewater in the Amazon, and abandoned more than 600 open pits filled with hazardous chemicals.

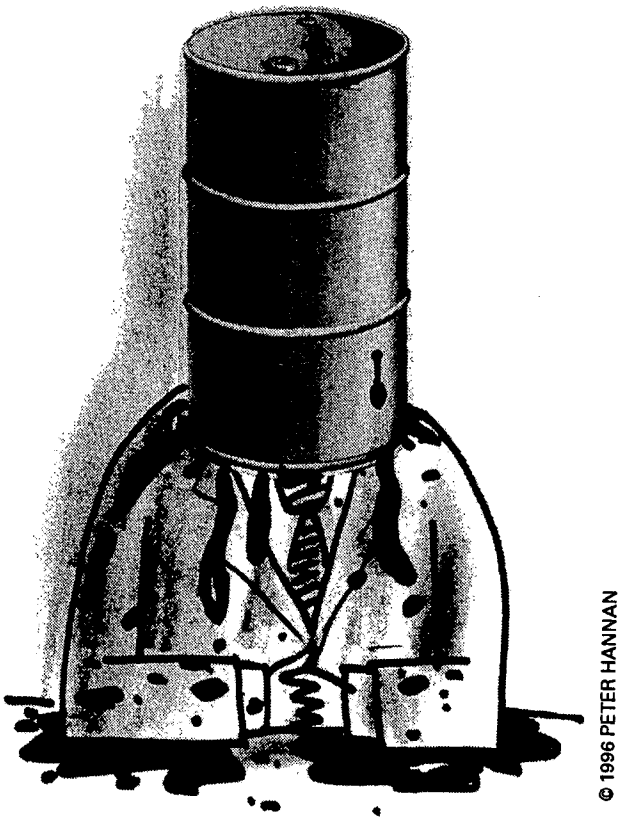
Residents of the affected Amazon region demanded a total cleanup as early as 1992; they filed a $1.5 billion class-action lawsuit against Texaco in U.S. federal court in 1993. However, it was not until last September that Texaco signed a cleanup agreement with Petroecuador and Ecuador's Ministry of Energy and Mines. Environmentalists denounced the agreement as inadequate because Texaco agreed to clean up only 139 of the 600 contaminated sites. "The agreement between the government and Texaco was agreed upon behind the backs of those affected," asserts Puente. "What we want is a complete plan of remediation and compensation for the harm done by Texaco to our biodiversity."

Puente's commission wants to reopen the cleanup agreement and create a congressional surveillance committee to suggest changes to that agreement. It also wants Texaco to invest $500 to $800 million to upgrade old, unsafe equipment left in Ecuador.

Paulina Garzun of Acción Ecológica, a Quito-based environmental group, accompanied Puente to Houston. She calls Texaco's cleanup efforts "largely superficial." In addition, Garzun reports, Texaco is applying standards of acceptable oil and toxic pollution as much as 500 times higher than similar limits in New York state, the oil company's home base.

Texaco's poor management of the cleanup has made some U.S. environmentalists suspicious. Judith Kimerling, an environmental lawyer and one of the first people to expose Texaco's misdeeds in Ecuador, says the company has run the cleanup operation like a circus. "There are contractors and subcontractors and no meaningful oversight. It's difficult to know what's going on. The cleanup is a sham."

Texaco spokesman Michael Trevino claims the Ecuadorian government is responsible for monitoring cleanup efforts. But the Ecuadorian congress, shut out of the agreement, doesn't have enough information to monitor the situation, says Kimerling, who has reviewed all the documents made public by Petroecuador, Texaco and the government. She contends the documents are too vague to allow readers to understand the cleanup activities. Texaco, she charges, is keeping the documents vague in a deliberate attempt to keep the cleanup process a secret. "Why carry out [the cleanup] as if they have something to hide?" she asks, "Why can't Texaco set the record straight with the facts?" For his part, Trevino says the oil company has tried to reach out to its critics and has "never refused a call from them."



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The Oriente's best hope is that the $1.5 billion lawsuit will force Texaco to expand its cleanup plans. The record shows that Texaco cannot be trusted to police itself. The oil giant continues to ignore environmental standards and human rights in order to pump up its profit margins.

—Robert Nixon

Loyalty oaths

RALPH NADER HAS A DRY SENSE OF HUMOR. HE CELEBRATED FLAG DAY LAST month by sending a letter to the CEOs of the nation's largest corporations, asking them to begin each board meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance. As he explained in his letter, millions of Americans wonder where the allegiance of large U.S. corporations really lies. He went on to explain: "Increasingly, the largest American companies are jettisoning any allegiance to the country where they are chartered and got their start and made their billions in profits. Instead of demonstrating loyalty to their home country, these companies are exporting plants overseas and outsourcing blue- and white-collar work to people earning serf-wages that keep them in poverty in places like Indonesia, China or India." Nader expressed concern that last May at General Motors' annual shareholders meeting in Wilmington, Del., CEO John Smith refused a request by a shareholder that GM pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America. "Flag Day," said Nader, "offers Mr. Smith an opportunity to reconsider his position." —J.B.

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MEDIA WATCH

By Thomas Goetz

And now, the documercial

Imagine you're the CEO of one of the biggest companies in the world—IBM, for example. What would you give to have a major network TV series that went to you for topics, was guaranteed to feature Big Blue frequently and prominently, and dovetailed nicely with your current ad campaign?

Millions, probably. But the days of sponsor control are over, you say. Editorial standards are too sacred, you say. No network would impeach itself like that, you say. None, that is, but NBC.

Last month the General Electric subsidiary announced plans for *Scan*, a new series on technology in daily life, to debut in September. It won't be on NBC proper, mind you, but on CNBC, the network's cable channel. The exclusive worldwide sponsor will be IBM. Early episodes will look at how the Vatican digitizes ancient documents and uploads them onto the Internet, and how Bangkok executives ride in mobile-office vans while stuck in traffic. Not surprisingly, IBM ads have already looked at both subjects in the company's "Solutions for a Small Planet" campaign.

After the *Wall Street Journal* disclosed the neat cooperative deal last month, CNBC went on the defensive. "Let me point out that *Scan* was conceived and developed by an independent producer," says a spokesperson. "The editorial control rests here at CNBC, not at IBM." But tell that to the sponsor. "If we see something that we really don't want aired," Marianne Caponnetto, IBM's director of media strategy, told the *Journal*, "of course we have final veto."

Ollie North, pamphleteer

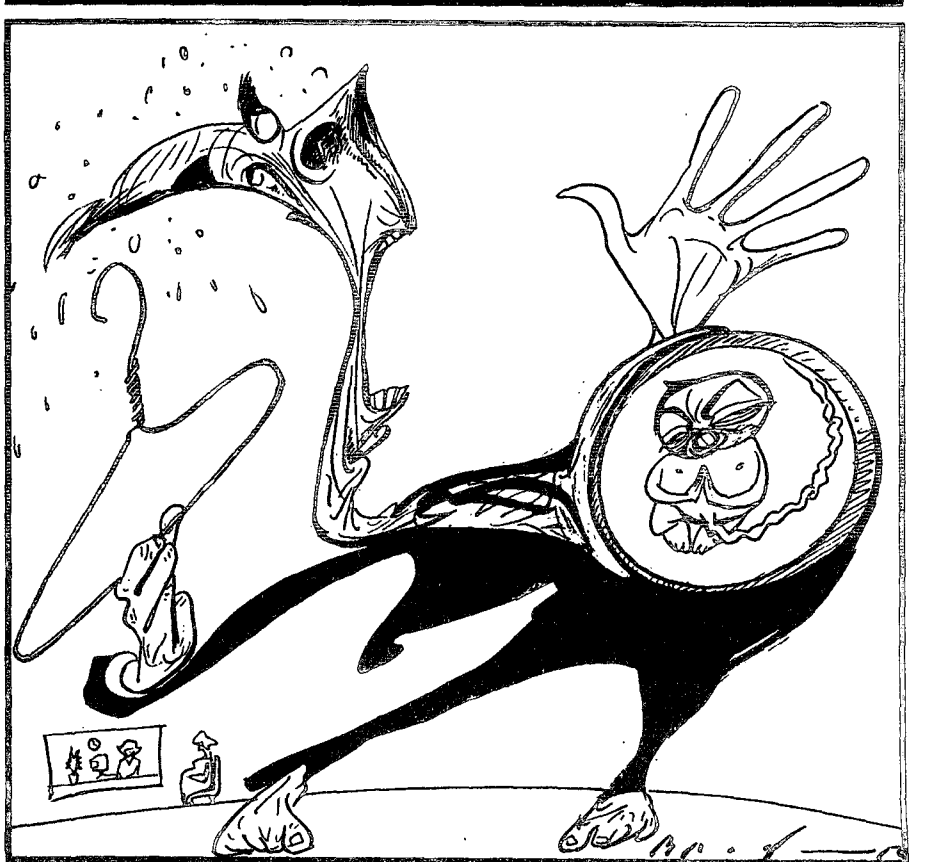
In these days of Filegate and Whitewater, sometimes one longs for old-fashioned Reagan-era scandals and villains. What, for instance, has ol' Ollie North been up to recently? Since narrowly losing Virginia's senatorial election in 1994, Iran-contra's stand-up guy has made a killing on the NASDAQ stock market selling bulletproof vests, and become host of an eminently popular talk-radio show. And now he's turned to publishing as editor-in-chief of *Ollie North's Front Lines*.

Produced by Eagle Publishing—the nation's largest newsletter publisher, with some 100 titles—*Front Lines* aims to take on the liberal hierarchy. Typical targets of a recent issue include the Unabomber's "intellectual kinship with the environmental left ... and Al Gore"; how Clinton lets the U.N. dictate U.S. foreign policy; and the false heroics of Magic Johnson, "basketball's patron saint of HIV enlightenment."

Special bonus for first-time subscribers: a copy of North's *Black Book*, containing the names of the 25 most dangerous liberals in Washington. "All we're trying to do is appeal to the audience that is already interested in North," says Mark Ziebarth, Eagle's marketing VP. "We're attempting to turn lemons into lemonade."

Front Lines is not Eagle's only venture into the far right. The company also owns the Conservative Book Club, publishes the *Jack Kemp Newsletter*, the *Evans-Novak Political Report*, and *Human Events*, the influential far-right weekly newspaper that routinely chastises Bob Dole for being soft.

TOMORROW'S NEWS TONIGHT — By Steve Brodner



Gary Bauer turns out to be Bob Dole's very own fetus. Dole shows up at abortion clinic at 3 AM.

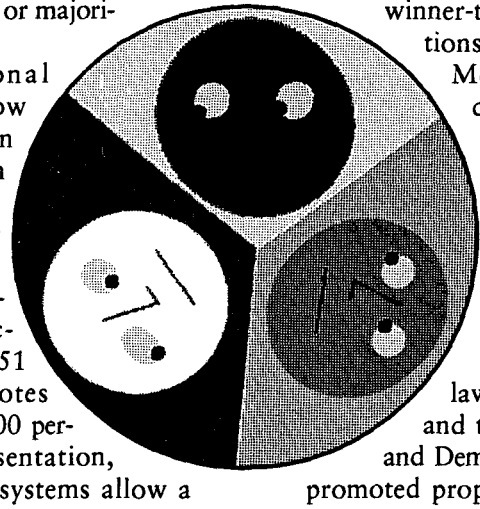
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A PROPORTIONAL SOLUTION

By voiding four congressional districts in North Carolina and Texas in twin rulings last month, the Supreme Court has once again sparked a bitter debate over the constitutionality of "majority-minority" legislative districts.

The stakes are high for minority candidates and their constituents. At the congressional level, Ron Dellums was the only black Democrat to win in a white-majority district in 1994, which bodes ill for the several black incumbents now forced to run in whiter districts. But the impact may be greater at the state and local level, where majority-minority districts have been essential in electing black and Latino candidates for the first time. In recent elections in Southern cities with a black population of 30 to 50 percent, for example, black candidates won 41 percent of districted seats—almost always with black majorities—but only 4 percent of winner-take-all, at-large seats.

But as University of Pennsylvania Law School Professor Lani Guinier comments, "A phoenix may rise from the ashes." Some black and Latino leaders are now looking to introduce more fundamental electoral reforms, such as proportional representation. Proportional voting systems, common in democracies around the world and increasingly popular in local elections in the United States, give racial and political minority voters a better chance to win representation and increase their opportunity to form coalitions with voters from other minority or majority groups.



Proportional systems allow voters to earn representation in direct relation to their voting strength. Unlike winner-take-all elections, where 51 percent of votes often means 100 percent of representation, proportional systems allow a candidate or party to win one of five seats with 20 percent of the vote and three seats with 51 percent.

In North Carolina, for example, a modestly proportional system could increase minority representation and still satisfy the Supreme Court's mania for color-blind lawmaking. By replacing its 12 congressional districts with four three-seat districts—which would establish any one candidate's "winning threshold" at 25 percent of the vote—black voters would have a clear opportunity to elect candidates in three districts.

Such a plan would have been an option 30 years ago, but in 1967 Congress mandated single-seat districts to prevent dilution of minority votes in winner-take-all, at-large elections. Now Rep. Cynthia McKinney has introduced the Voters' Choice Act to restore states' power to hold multi-seat elections—provided candidates are chosen under a proportional system.

Voting-rights lawyers such as Guinier and the Center for Voting and Democracy's Ed Still have promoted proportional systems for years; more recently, prominent opponents of race-conscious districting—such as political commentator Kevin Phillips, the architect of Richard Nixon's Southern strategy—have urged their consideration.

Indeed, most voters would likely welcome proportional representation for another reason: It would discourage the political gerrymandering by which legislators shield incumbents and gain partisan advantage. As Justice John Paul Stevens lamented in his dissent in the Texas case, "By minimizing the critical role that political motives played in the creation of these districts, I fear that the Court may inadvertently encourage this more objectionable use of power in the redistricting process." To empower racial and political minorities, to elect more women (who fare better in multi-seat districts) and to provide all voters with increased choice, there may never be a better time to work for proportional voting systems at all levels of government.

—Rob Richie

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Corporate welfare at the Pentagon

AN INVESTIGATION BY REP. BERNIE SANDERS (I-VT) HAS DISCOVERED THAT SINCE the early 1990s the Pentagon has routinely been spending hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars to cover the downsizing costs that result from corporate mergers. Currently the Defense Department is deciding whether or not to give the Lockheed Martin Corp. almost $1 billion to pay for the "defense restructuring costs" that resulted from the 1995 merger of Lockheed and Martin Marietta. Lockheed Martin wants the Pentagon to pick up the $670 million tab for moving shop from Valley Forge, Pa., and East Windsor, N.J., to Sunnyvale, Calif. The money would also help the new company shut down the Lockheed facility in Austin, Texas, and transfer the work done there to "other locations and outsourcing." Lockheed Martin is asking for a further $35 million to create a new division of the company, which will be called Lockheed Martin Enterprise Information Systems. Decrying this "boondoggle" as "corporate welfare at its worst," Sanders has introduced legislation that would prohibit any further Pentagon subsidies for "defense-restructuring costs" that result from corporate mergers. The legislation would also instruct the Pentagon to account for the funds it has spent so far. —J.B.

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DOZING THE MEDIA

Tired of slick, nuanced corporate media manipulation? Come to Peoria, Ill., Caterpillar's company town, for the old-fashioned, ham-handed variety.

Wary of damaging the heavy equipment manufacturer's jealously guarded local prestige, WEEK-TV, the NBC affiliate and leading broadcast station in the Peoria market, committed outright self-censorship this spring.

A May 14 taped interview provided a 10-minute PR opportunity for Caterpillar CEO Don Fites to make the case that there's more than corporate greed behind the company's adamant anti-union position. WEEK anchor Mike Dimmick kicked off the interview with admirable obsequiousness:

> Dimmick: "Do we need a political debate, preferably not in an election year, on free trade?"
> Fites: "I don't think we need a major political debate on free trade. I think we need a major educational thrust. ..."
> Dimmick: Which is why I mentioned, not during an election year—"
> Fites: "I agree with you Mike, not during an election year particularly."

Dimmick's final question, however, set off alarm bells in WEEK's management office:

> Dimmick: "A lot has happened over the last few years. ... You've had death threats, the UAW says there have been strike-related deaths, suicides, domestic problems. With all that in mind, was it worth it?"
> Fites: "If what you're asking me is was it worth it to make sure we're competitive worldwide, and to keep jobs in this area, yes, it was worth it."

That exchange was cut from the program minutes before it was due to air. Cat's communications director browbeat Dimmick's news director into censoring the question and the reply, presumably because it made Fites appear insensitive.

Stories of angry confrontation between the anchor and his boss circulated within Peoria's tight media community until the Peoria *Journal Star* broke the story on June 20. WEEK's now contrite news director confessed, "In the back of my mind, I was concerned. I didn't want my journalists frozen out of the biggest story in town."

Such trepidation is not unjustified, as other Peoria media outlets could attest. WCBU-FM, the public radio station at Cat-subsidized Bradley University, aired a labor perspective on its regular commentary series shortly after the current Cat/UAW labor struggle began. After an angry phone call from a Cat official, the station stopped broadcasting commentaries altogether.

Despite its typical pro-company slant, the *Journal Star* also rubbed Cat the wrong way in its strike coverage two summers ago. Since then, Caterpillar won't return calls. "Maybe you're not aware that we don't share information with the *Journal Star*," the company's communications director barked at reporter Terry Towery before slamming down the phone last month.

The Cat PR office knows how the newsroom works. Two top PR execs are former *Journal Star* reporters, and others were hired from Peoria's CBS affiliate and from WCBU-FM. The Cat flack who collaborated with Dimmick on the Fites interview was a former news director from his own station.

But Cat's latest success in muscling the media may prove to have a tonic effect on the media's future coverage of Caterpillar. Reports of this latest flap in the *Journal Star* are flavored with a sense of shame.

—Franklin North

THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH — By Peter Hannan



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THE FIRST STONE

PUBLIC TELEVISION ON THE BLOCK

By Joel Bleifuss

A backdoor deal on Capitol Hill has sparked a new salvo in the ongoing war against public broadcasting. On April 25, Pennsylvania's two Republican senators, Arlen Specter and Rick Santorum, with the help of Democratic Rep. John Murtha, attached a special provision in the federal budget bill that funded the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). This rider grants the FCC the power to approve the sale of Pittsburgh public television station WQEX to the highest commercial bidder "without conducting a rulemaking or other proceeding."

WQEX, a UHF station, is owned by WQED, a VHF station that made broadcasting history in 1954 when it became the nation's first community-owned public television station. Now, WQED stands to make history again as it seeks to sell its sister station.

After nearly two decades of mismanagement, WQED is $12 million in debt, $10 million of which is owed to Pittsburgh's Mellon Bank. The WQED management sees only one way out of its predicament: sell WQEX, use the $35 to $60 million sale price to pay its debt, and invest the rest.

WQED carries the standard Public Broadcasting System menu—*Frontline*, *Masterpiece Theater*, *Sesame Street*, etc. The station is also home port for the nationally syndicated *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*. But the truly neighborly station in Pittsburgh is WQED's sister station, WQEX, which broadcasts locally focused, public-interest programming on labor, environmental and consumer issues. This serious fare is laced with British sitcoms and science fiction movies.

The commercial sale of a public television channel would set a "dangerous precedent," says David Honig, a communications lawyer who serves as executive director of the Minority Media and Telecommunications Council, an organization that represents national minority organizations before the FCC. He is working on behalf of Pittsburgh citizens who are opposed to the sale. "If the FCC allows this backdoor sale to go through," Honig says, "it is the beginning of the end of public broadcasting as we know it. It will stand as a precedent for the evisceration of public broadcasting as a forum for diverse viewpoints."

In the United States, 30 cities have two public television channels. In 12 of those cities, besides Pittsburgh, the two stations are owned by the same nonprofit company. Those 12 stations are closely following what is happening in Pittsburgh. George Miles, the CEO of WQED, told the Pittsburgh City Council that executives from all of the other 12 "duopolies" have contacted him about the sale, and some of them have told him that they too would like to sell their sister stations, or, as he puts it, to "transfer assets."

Due to budget cuts imposed by the Republican Congress, public television stations are scrambling for alternative funding sources. In a letter to the editor of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, reader Mark Ginsburg notes that the plans to sell the station were precipitated not only by bad management but also by a falloff in federal funding. "Is it a coincidence," he asks, "that WQED and other public stations have had to go begging to corporations and wealthy individuals during a time when our tax system and other government policies have helped to concentrate more money among the richest segment of the population?"

The sale of public television space on the public airwaves to private interests is not unprecedented. Last year, New York City got permission from the FCC to sell WNYC, a city-owned public station, to ITT and Dow Jones for $207 million. The new commercial station will broadcast business and sports news.

The station currently provides programming for 18 different ethnic and community groups. Gita Bajaj, chair of the Coalition of Ethnic Broadcasters, has petitioned both the New York Supreme Court and the FCC to stop the sale, which was due to be finalized as *In These Times* went to press. "We believe that the sale of WNYC is discriminatory," says Bajaj, "and that it will amount to an ethnic cleansing of airwaves in the tri-state area."

Other attempts to privatize the public airwaves have been successfully challenged. In 1980, KQED, San Francisco's public station, applied to the FCC for permission to sell its second station. A citizens' mobilization fought back that effort. Twelve years later, in 1992, the FCC finally awarded the channel to a minority-owned group, which will continue to operate it as a public station.

Bob McChesney, a journalism professor at the University of Wisconsin, sees the battle to save second stations like

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WQEX in Pittsburgh as "one of the really important fights in media politics." "These second stations are the ones that are community stations," he says. "They are the ones that take more chances, putting stuff on that wouldn't get past commercial censors. To the extent that there is exciting public television, it is on these secondary stations." According to McChesney it is no accident that political conservatives, who rant about how much they hate public television, are content to let the first-line stations survive. "They would be happy to get rid of the second-line stations," McChesney says, "Those are the stations that should bother them because they are the ones that are going outside the implicit commercial censorship of the market."

Jim Naureckas, the editor of *Extra!*, the magazine of Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting (FAIR), says that the public needs more than one station. "The public is not an entity that should be given the same amount of space on the dial as Disney ABC, or Westinghouse CBS, or General Electric NBC," says Naureckas. "That there should be one slot for the public, like there is for each of these megacorporations, is really selling the public short."

McChesney echoes Naureckas' concerns. "The idea that one public station can satisfy a community is as ludicrous as asserting that one private commercial station can serve the public's needs," says McChesney. "Yet we live under this myth that one corporate public station, dependent on corporate handouts and controlled by local regional elites, can provide all the public broadcasting for an entire community."

Jerold Starr, of the QED Accountability Project, a grass-roots media watchdog organization, has been leading the public outcry over the planned "asset conversion" of WQEX, which is another way WQED management refers to the sale of the station. Opposition has coalesced into an ad hoc coalition called "Save Pittsburgh Public TV," which is angry that the decision to sell WQEX was made without any input from Pittsburgh citizens. But the city's business elite was consulted, according to lawyers involved in the negotiations. Apparently the station management has the endorsement of every major CEO in Pittsburgh, all of whom say that the decision to sell WQEX reflects sound business judgment.

Starr says that, in general, the executives who run public television don't support local programming because it doesn't pay back financial dividends and because it doesn't provide them with the prestige that comes with producing a high-profile television program. Starr believes that the desire for such prestige has motivated the board and management of WQED to cash out Pittsburgh's second station. After all, WQED officials derive more status from programs such as corporate-sponsored National Geographic specials than from the station's current national programs such as the children's game show *Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?*

"WQED management wants big bucks to pursue their ambition to be a national producer," says Starr. "They want to become a for-profit producer, and they can't pursue this national production strategy without getting out of debt by liquidating their second station."

"It's a railroad job," he continues. "Normally WQED would have to apply for a rulemaking, and the process would take several months. This circumvents all of that. And the only reason to circumvent all of that is because once the public gets educated as to what is happening, opposition would emerge. They do not want to have to defend their decision in the public arena."

At a June 20 meeting, the WQED board voted to petition the FCC to allow WQEX's sale. Prior to the vote, Starr went to the podium and asked: "What is the urgency? This station, WQED, has belonged to the people of Pittsburgh for 42 years. You cannot wipe out 42 years in one month." But according to the special legislative exemption that it has been granted, the board of WQED can, and will, do just that.

WQED management has also resorted to a form of extortion to get its way. According to papers filed with the FCC, if the federal government fails to approve the sale, WQED will give WQEX to Cornerstone TeleVision, Inc. in exchange for the commercial channel this Christian Coalition outlet is currently using. Once that swap is completed, WQED will then sell this private station and kick back an undisclosed portion of the millions in profits to Pat Robertson and Co. The FCC is left with two choices: permit the sale of a public station, or be held responsible for helping the Christian Coalition upgrade their position on the public airwaves.

Starr's coalition is urging WQED subscribers to send future pledge dollars to the Pittsburgh-based "Public Television for Working Americans Escrow Fund" until hearings have been held and alternatives to commercialization have been explored. "Public television bears an increasing burden of bearing democratic discussion, and providing a vehicle for the voices of those not normally heard," says Starr. "Without WQEX, all that would be available to the people is corporate-sponsored communications."

The coalition proposes that as an alternative to the sale of WQEX, the board could carry the $10 million debt that is held by Mellon Bank and pursue a long-term strategy of aggressively mobilizing community support around public television programming. With their base thus expanded, the station would be in a better position to raise money and pay off the debt.

However the FCC rules, Pittsburgh should serve as a warning to public television advocates in Boston, Dallas, Minneapolis/St. Paul and Milwaukee—some of the cities where public television management has expressed interest in Pittsburgh's plans to cash in by selling out. ◁

To register your opinion on this matter, contact FCC chair Reed Hundt by fax (202-418-2801) or by e-mail (rhundt@fcc.gov) or by writing him at 119 M St. NW, Washington, DC 20554.

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BLACK AMERICA

Burning hate

The recent spate of black church burnings confronts America with its racist past —and present.

By Salim Muwakkil

Nearly 100 predominantly black churches have been torched since 1990, their congregations forced to watch in horror as the very centers of their communities were consumed by the flames of racial hatred. Americans of all races have recoiled in shock—and often with genuine shame—as the attacks have escalated in recent months. But despite President Clinton's call for interracial solidarity and the belated appeals of white evangelical Christian leaders for racial reconciliation, many African-Americans are left wondering whether white America grasps the meaning and significance of this reign of terror.

So far, police have arrested 34 suspects in connection with the arson attacks. All but two of the suspects are white, according to figures compiled by the Center for Democratic Renewal (CDR), an Atlanta-based hate-crimes watchdog group. Investigators suspect that most of the attacks have been random acts of vandalism and not part of a conspiracy. But there's little solace in that distinction.

"The conspiracy is racism itself," says Noah Chandler, a CDR research associate. The Rev. Jesse Jackson of the National Rainbow Coalition/Operation PUSH attributes the burnings to a "cultural conspiracy" that reinforces long-held racial biases, inspired at least in part by the race-baiting rhetoric of the political right. Jackson has urged Clinton to convene a White House conference on racial justice. "We can't just focus on the fire and not the fuel," he says.

"This is the most serious thing that I think has happened in the South in years—far more serious than the dollar value of a church building that is burned," says Morris Dees, co-founder of the Alabama-based Southern Poverty Law Center, another group that monitors racist groups. "Symbolically, the burning of black churches is more important than the World Trade Center bombing." Unlike the other investigators, Dees maintains that many of the church burnings are part of an explicit conspiracy.

Last June, two black churches in rural Greeleyville, S.C., were destroyed by fire, and two white men are now jailed on arson charges. Dees' center has filed a civil lawsuit on behalf of one of the churches, alleging that the men acted under the direction of the Christian Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, a Klan splinter group. The suit seeks compensatory damages for the destruction of church property and punitive damages to "punish the defendants for their intentional and malicious acts and to deter others from engaging in such acts." Dees' group has been successful in the civil prosecution of the Klan and other hate groups. In 1987, the center won a $7 million verdict against another KKK splinter group, the United Klans of America, for lynching a black man in Alabama, and in 1990 the group won a $12 million ruling against the White Aryan Resistance in connection with the murder of a black man in Oregon. In both cases, the punitive damages effectively put the groups out of business. If any of the 30 other white suspects held in connection with recent church burnings are linked to racist organizations, those groups, too, will be vulnerable to civil action.

The cloud of this tragedy may have a few other silver linings as well. Expressions of support in words and dollars have poured into aid organizations from a wide variety of sources. The National Council of Churches, which has led the effort to focus national attention on the church burnings, has established a fund and mobilized support to help the victimized congregations rebuild their churches. As news of the burnings has spread, groups spanning the religious spectrum have offered their support and assistance, some

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The Rev. Patricia Lowman and her daughter at the remains of their church in Columbia, S.C.

establishing funds of their own.

So moved was Ralph Reed, executive director of the Christian Coalition, that he offered "repentance" for the past racial sins of white evangelical Christians and called for a day of national racial reconciliation. Reed pledged to raise at least $1 million to help rebuild African-American churches that have been burned. "It is a painful truth that the white evangelical church was not only on the sidelines but in many cases on the wrong side of the most central struggle for social justice in this century," he said during a June meeting with black ministers and representatives of the NAACP, the Anti-Defamation League and other groups called to marshal support for the destroyed churches. "We come today bearing the burden of that past, with broken hearts, a repentant spirit and ready hands to fight this senseless violence," Reed said. The coalition has dubbed July 14 "Racial Reconciliation Sunday" for the 100,000 churches on the group's mailing list, and he will urge members to donate generously to the rebuilding fund.

But the involvement of the Christian Coalition, perhaps the most powerful political force on the religious right, has been greeted with skepticism by others involved in the rebuilding effort. "Reconciliation requires something much stronger than charity," said the Rev. Joseph Lowery, director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. "Charity can be motivated by pity, but love embraces justice." Lowery said the root of the problem is racism, not the burning of churches, "and the Christian Coalition's right-wing agenda has contributed to the very climate of negativism." With his gift for metaphor, Jesse Jackson nicely summed up many activists' view of the Christian Coalition's role. "We shouldn't get tripped up by people like Ralph Reed, who seed the clouds of racism to make intolerance rain and then offer us an umbrella."

Despite the outpouring of support for the rebuilding effort, few organizations seem willing to trace the problem of church burnings to the racist roots of American culture. In a sense, the absence of any organized conspiracy to burn churches is more disturbing than an organized conspiracy would be; it means we live in an era when individuals, unconnected to one another or with organized white supremacist groups, consider burning black churches an act worthy of emulation.

Indeed, the burning of black churches has historically been a common mode of white supremacist violence. "There have been attacks on black churches ever since there have been black churches in this country," notes C. Eric Lincoln, professor emeritus of religion at Duke University and author of the 1996 book *Coming Through The Fire: Surviving Race and Place in America.* Since African-Americans were allowed few opportunities to exercise autonomy and to affirm their culture, black churches became centers for activities that were both sacred and secular. Because of their mobilizing and ennobling functions, these churches antagonized many whites.

The first recorded torching of a black church occurred in South Carolina in 1822, Lincoln writes. In 1829, white mobs torched churches in Cincinnati's African-American ward, and Philadelphia's churches became constant targets of disgruntled whites during the mid-1800s. In their campaign to terrorize blacks into submission to white rule after the Civil War, the Ku Klux Klan habitually targeted black churches. Only during the civil rights era, when the nation recoiled at the 1963 bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., that killed four young girls, did most of white America learn of this ugly

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legacy. The motivations for that attack were the same as they have always been: By attacking black churches, white supremacists were striking at the very heart of the movement for racial equality.

The burning of a black church has always been much more than a question of destroying its property value; only at the level of symbol can we understand its significance. "This is about more than just bricks and mortar," explains Ron Daniels, executive director of the New York-based Center for Constitutional Rights, an organization enlisted by the National Council of Churches to serve as part of its Emergency Response Team. The council called this group of organizers together to help mobilize support for the affected congregations, to monitor official investigations of the fires and to help catch the culprits. "We are vigorously pushing the issue of prosecution," says Daniels. "The issue is not just rebuilding the churches but also social justice, and we intend to ensure that justice prevails." Daniels says his group is considering adopting Dees' civil litigation strategy in cases in several Southern states.

Daniels echoes others who blame a social climate rife with race-baiting for the upsurge in racist terrorism. "The black community—through the myths of welfare, affirmative action and crime—has become the scapegoat for the pressures and dislocations that are being felt in the larger U.S. economy. We have a bunch of angry white males who are being told to look for answers in white supremacy and domestic terrorism. We must confront that."

President Bill Clinton has forcefully denounced the church burnings and created a special task force to investigate them, but he has not labeled the fires "domestic terrorism," which would mobilize the additional resources that critics argue are necessary to mount an effective probe. "In New York City, when the World Trade Center was bombed, a piece of scrap metal was enough to indict 10 men—that's how vigorous that investigation was," says Daniels. Similarly, the investigation of the bombing in Oklahoma City yielded two suspects within weeks. "Why haven't we seen those kind of investigations with the church bombings?" Daniels asks.

Federal authorities ought to classify the church burnings as suspected domestic terrorist incidents, argues Tyrone Powers, a former FBI agent who has followed the church burnings closely. "The attorney general's guidelines for terrorism are: 'the unlawful use of force or violence, committed by a group or groups of two or more individuals, against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof in furtherance of political or social objectives.' "

But Powers, the author of *Eyes to My Soul: The Rise or Decline of a Black FBI Agent*, a memoir of his nine years in an agency he characterizes as pervasively racist, detects familiar political motives in this foot-dragging. If word got around during the 1996 Summer Olympics that the same kind of racist terrorism that characterized the Old South was still at large, he maintains, Atlanta's international reputation as the center of the "New South" would be seriously tarnished. Clinton has been talking tough about "hunting terrorism down wherever it is," Powers says, but now that the world is coming to Atlanta "he's been hoisted on his own petard."

When Clinton flew to South Carolina in early June to visit the ruins of the Mount Zion AME church in Greeleyville, S.C., Republican National Committee chairman Haley Barbour called the visit "shameless, transparent politics." House Majority Leader Dick Armey joined in the criticism, and even Republican presidential contender Bob Dole accused Clinton of politicizing the burnings. The Congressional Black Caucus has mildly praised Clinton's efforts to address the burnings—but only by way of countering Republican charges that the president has exploited his visits to torched churches for political mileage. "We think the president was right to take the bully pulpit, to take the high ground on this issue," said Rep. Ron Dellums (D-CA). Polls also indicated that Clinton's action was politically popular.

By contrast, the Republican Party's reticent reaction to the burnings apparently has hurt its image. Speaking at an Iowa campaign fundraiser, former Housing Secretary Jack Kemp warned GOP leaders that their harsh criticism of the president made them look to the public like "a bunch of grumpy old men," adding cryptically, "I want the Republican Party to come across more like Ronald Reagan than Pat Buchanan."

In other words, Kemp urges the GOP to disguise its racist impulses in the puerile evocations of a mythic America that kept Reagan popular. He's not calling for a public repudiation of the race-baiting tactics that promote racial attacks because the GOP owes its present prominence in the South to those very tactics. It's unlikely the party would surrender its tactical advantage just for the sake of smoother race relations. In fact, racial tensions are good for the GOP.

Now that these burnings have awakened even the long-slumbering conscience of the white Christian right, a slender opportunity may be opening for more serious attempts at racial reconciliation. Of course, Ralph Reed's expression of contrition might simply be an immediate reaction to the sacrilege of flaming churches. But Reed's strong condemnation of racial animosity may be helpful in tempering the GOP's divisive racial rhetoric and discrediting social policies that are much more destructive to the African-American community than the fires.

Dees doesn't think the fires will stop until large enough rewards are offered to persuade people with information to contact authorities. Thus, as a practical matter, he recently urged the governors of nine Southern states to establish substantial reward funds—a minimum of $100,000 in each church arson. And although such practical solutions do little to attack the underlying problem of racism, they'll have to do until the nation is ready to confront the demon at its core. ◀

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ENVIRONMENT

Too little, too late

In the two decades since it was enacted, the Endangered Species Act has done little to protect threatened plants and animals.

By Will Nixon

Like Rip van Winkle, Tom Sawyer and Moby Dick, Mark Twain's "jumping frog of Calaveras County" has stepped right out of literature into American folklore. For more than 50 years, the civic boosters of Calaveras County in the Sierra Nevada foothills of California have capitalized on this famous tale by holding their own frog-jumping contests. The competition draws hundreds of contestants, who bring their own frogs or even rent them. But one detail has changed. Today's competitors use bullfrogs, a prolific species that didn't reach California until 1896. The gamblers Twain described in his story probably took red-legged frogs, which lived in swamps and streams across much of the state. Today, however, this amphibian has vanished from most of its historical range, the victim of dams, farm irrigation, urbanization and all of the other changes to the state's waterways. Today, only three sites support vibrant populations of more than 350 mature red-legged frogs.

On May 20, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) listed the red-legged frog as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act, ending a moratorium on new listings that the Republican Congress had imposed in April 1995. Although public and private agencies worry about the status of thousands of species in the United States—the Nature Conservancy estimates that about one-third of our plants and animals are vulnerable, if not imperiled—the FWS and the National Marine Fisheries Service (which is responsible for marine species) don't have full legal power and responsibility to start protecting species until they appear on official "threatened" or "endangered" lists. As a result, conservationists and developers wage heated campaigns in the courts and in public in an effort to force the federal agencies to accept or reject candidates for listing. The country now has 962 threatened or endangered species with another 224 under formal consideration.

The FWS didn't pick the red-legged frog by chance. A court ordered the agency to reach a decision by May 20 after scientists petitioned it in 1992 to consider the animal's plight. But Mark Twain's frog was also a colorful choice, one that made the front page of the *New York Times*. To counter conservatives' fanciful stories of little critters restraining American freedom, the agency has grown adept at marketing animals. Last year, the bald eagle graduated from the endangered to the threatened list amid much patriotic publicity. And after inheriting the "train wreck" of the spotted owl case in the Pacific Northwest, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt has touted the government's cooperative agreements with Southern timber companies to protect the red-cockaded woodpecker, and with Southern California developers and municipalities to save coastal sage habitats for the California gnatcatcher. "The Endangered Species Act is not the problem," Babbitt says. "The problem is that the people who have administered it haven't creatively explored the range of possibilities in this wonderfully expansive law."

Such comments make many conservationists cringe. They allege that under the guise of a green administration, the FWS has weakened some important regulations to appease private landowners and to avoid controversies that could hurt Clinton's popularity. "If the Bush administration had done half the things that I've seen the Clinton administration do in the past two years, conservation groups would be going berserk," says Eric Glitzenstein, an attorney with the Fund for Animals, based in Silver Spring, Md. For example, the FWS has long kept a list of about 4,000 candidates for listing, but in February, the agency slashed the list to 182

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species with the strongest cases. Glitzenstein laments that "with one stroke of the pen the director got rid of thousands of species." The agency wants to streamline the listing process, but this decision could have an insidious effect. The Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management and other federal departments had to at least consider the 4,000 candidate species when they prepared environmental impact studies for proposed logging, mining, grazing or other potentially destructive activities. Now they may simply ignore all but the select 182 on the list. The Fund for Animals and other groups have filed a lawsuit to overturn this change.

Jasper Carlton of the Biodiversity Legal Foundation in Boulder, Colo., now has 30 lawsuits pending under the Endangered Species Act. "The Republican moratorium was the least of it," he says. "The policies of the Clinton administration have done far more damage." He accuses the FWS of playing politics with listings.

By law, the FWS must base its decisions on science, not politics. In May, for example, Deputy Director Jim Rodgers issued a memo outlining the policies for considering species now that the moratorium is over. The agency will set priorities based on "biological need" and "sound science," he wrote, not court cases or, presumably, political pressure. Carlton admits that he can't cite concrete evidence of political interference, but he finds too many inconsistences to believe that science alone drives the agency's decisions. The case of the Atlantic salmon has been "severely delayed," he says, while many more prolific Western salmon species have made the list. Once common in the East, the Atlantic salmon now spawns in a handful of rivers that draw hundreds of fish at best. But restoring them would cause an uproar in Maine, where the salmon rivers have been altered by hydroelectric dams and pulp mills. The agency has chosen to focus instead on uncontroversial species, Carlton says. "They have a group of 25 plants in Hawaii," he says "Instead of doing all of them, they should pick two or three that are keystones for the ecosystem, and save time for other things."

Yet listing isn't the only problem. Conservationists are losing efforts to protect the habitat of the Florida panther, the most endangered big mammal in the United States, with 30 to 50 surviving members, says Sidney Maddock of the Fund for Animals. His group recently lost a legal bid to block a 900-acre landfill to be built beside land where a panther has been seen. The state will soon build a university campus just west of a prime panther habitat. "Once the area is developed, the indirect and cumulative impacts will probably lead to the loss of several cats in the area," he warns. And in the Big Cypress National Preserve, the state wants to construct a parking lot and other amenities for off-road vehicles that would invade panther country. "It's very hard to win these cases with the federal judiciary that exists today," Maddock says. "If the Endangered Species Act allows this kind of activity in panther habitats, it suggests that the Act is not strong enough."

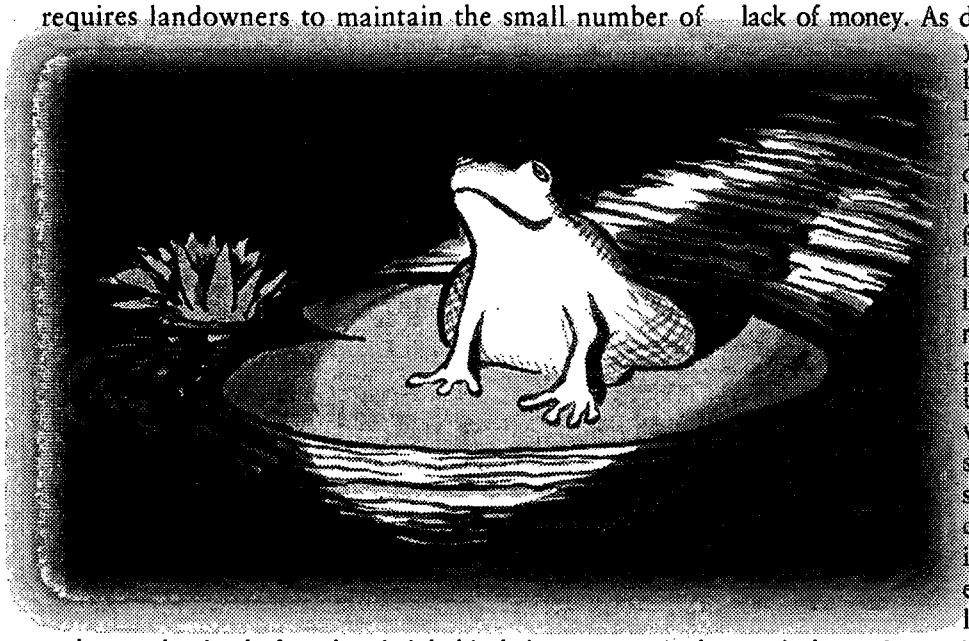


To be fair, the Clinton administration has successfully opposed many devastating changes to the Act proposed by conservative congressional Republicans. And the GOP's anti-environmental campaign, inspired by industry and property rights groups, has offended moderate Republicans worried about their green image. In June, for example, some 82 Republicans joined the Democrats in defeating a rider proposed by Rep. Frank Riggs (R-CA) that would have stopped the FWS from designating habitats on private lands to be preserved for the marbled murrelet, an endangered sea bird that nests in some old-growth stands owned by timber companies. The rider would have helped the Pacific Lumber Co. evade a court order that stopped some of its logging in February 1995. Nonetheless, the conservative assault has shifted the debate away from flaws in the Act that allow so many species to slip into critical condition. Instead, the discussion focuses on helping private landholders avoid conflicts over the law. The Clinton administration has encouraged this shift. "They have followed a defensive, defeatist strategy" that accepts a false image of the Act as a draconian law, says Glitzenstein. "I can't think of any proactive steps in listing that the administration has taken in the last two years."

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With the end of the moratorium, the FWS will now address a select backlog of 242 species, leading Glitzenstein and Carlton to complain that the agency may deliberately ignore more controversial and more truly endangered species that don't appear on this priority list. In any case, listing remains a crucial step. In an analysis of listings between 1985 and 1991, David Wilcove and two colleagues from the Environmental Defense Fund found that vertebrate animals reached endangered status with a median population of 1,075 members, invertebrates 999 members, and plants 120 members. (Almost 40 plants had fewer than 10 remaining survivors.) Given the risks of inbreeding or catastrophes that may destroy small isolated groups of animals or plants, they concluded in an article for *Conservation Biology* in 1993 that "protection under the Endangered Species Act is coming much too late for most species." In the 1995 year-end report to Congress, Wilcove now adds, the FWS admits that fewer than 10 percent of the listed species are gaining, while almost 40 percent are still declining. "With the end of the moratorium, we return to the status quo, which isn't very good," he says. Since the Act went into effect in 1974, only five species have recovered robustly enough to leave the lists. Jasper Carlton fears that wildlife managers have begun settling for the "minimal survival" of rare species rather than aiming for their restoration to healthy numbers.

The heart of the problem is the Act's weak provisions relating to private lands, says Wilcove. The law simply requires landowners to maintain the small number of endangered animals that already inhabit their property. And it only makes them preserve the species' habitat, which may hardly be enough for small animals threatened by predators or plants that need fires to blossom. Somehow, Wilcove says, these landowners must be recruited as active managers who will help these species prosper and grow. The Clinton administration's enthusiasm for working with property owners isn't misguided, he says, but it shouldn't turn into a giveaway. Wilcove praises the FWS' "Safe Harbors" program, begun in April 1995, which insures that landowners won't be penalized by stricter rules if, as a result of good management, their property becomes better habitat and attracts more endangered animals. "In the Southeast, some landowners have prematurely cut their pine trees because they were afraid that if [the trees] got older, the red-cockaded woodpecker would show up and they would now be restricted," Wilcove says. Under the new policy, which covers 20,000 acres in North Carolina, he expects the woodpecker population to double.



But others believe that the FWS goes overboard in collaborating with private landowners. The agency has now negotiated many habitat conservation plans, for example, as an alternative to litigation. The first plan protected 90 percent of the habitat of two rare butterflies on San Bruno Mountain in California, but many more recent plans for the northern spotted owl in Oregon and Washington allow timber companies to harvest 95 percent of the birds' habitat. The plans may also now include a "No Surprises" provision, which insures landowners that the government won't force them to undertake new preservation measures, even if the species continues to decline. Carlton has challenged this policy in court. "It abandons the use of the best scientific data available—the bulwark of the Act," he says. "Instead, it says that 'a deal is a deal,' even if tomorrow we learn that we've made a terrible error."

Like many environmental agencies, the FWS suffers from a lack of money. As director Mollie Beattie complained last year, "The Fish and Wildlife Service's budget for recovery programs for all 962 listed U.S. species was $39.7 million in 1995. That's about the cost of building one mile of urban highway." Congress has cut the budget for listing species from $8 million in FY 1995 to $4 million this year, after letting the program limp along on $233,000 during the six-month budget impasse. The American public, which spends upwards of $60 billion a year on hunting and watching wildlife, should contribute more to preserving all of our natural heritage, not simply the species that prosper as people change the landscape. But Jasper Carlton insists that "the lack of money is a cheap excuse right now." The FWS should follow biology, not politics. "What scares me is that we're not just losing a couple of species, we're continuing to destroy some of the last undisturbed habitats in North America. We're losing the possibility of recovering them in the wild." Like Newt Gingrich, perhaps, we may end up only loving our rare animals in zoos. ◁

Will Nixon is a freelance writer living in New York who frequently writes on environmental issues.

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THE ACADEMY

Pulling up the ladder

New admissions and financial aid policies at private universities may shut out poorer students.

By Kim Phillips

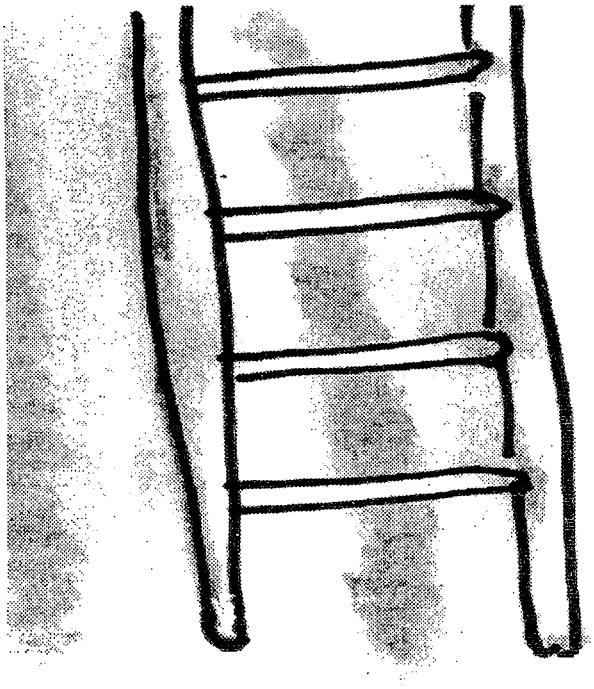
Hermine Hayes-Klein is just the kind of person whose picture would appear in a guidebook to the University of Chicago. She's intelligent, outspoken, confrontational, the sort you imagine lolling on the Midwestern gothic quads arguing about Plato or postcolonialism. Hermine attends the University of Chicago on a near-complete scholarship. If only she came from a wealthier family, she'd be the perfect undergrad.

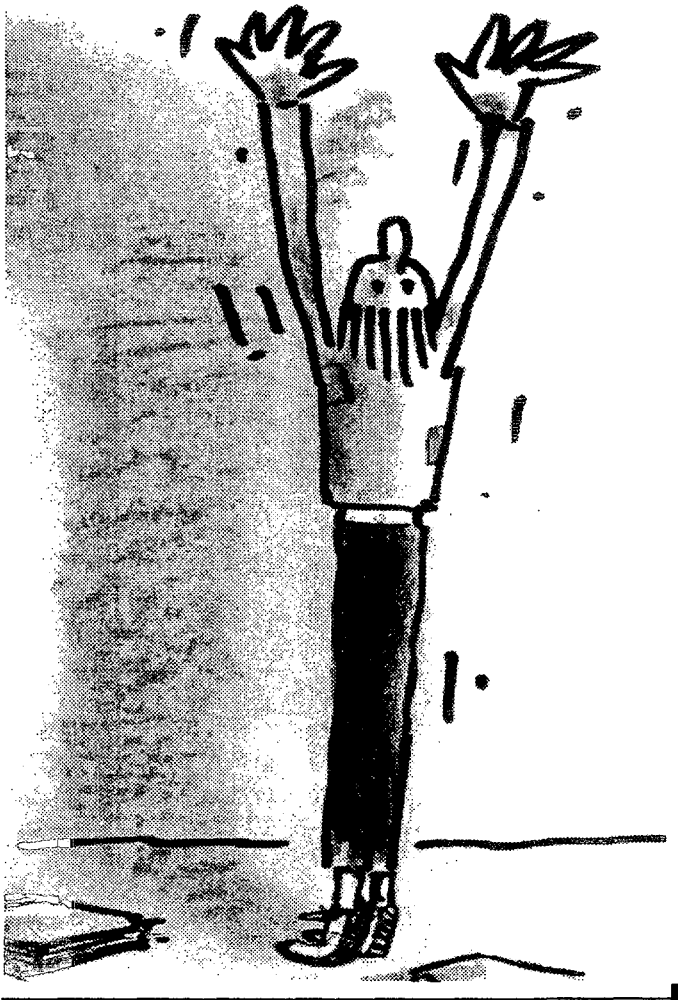
It's a strange day when the nation's private universities start to jabber about staying competitive. After all, the Ivory Tower is the original monopoly: Only Harvard can give you a Harvard degree. You'd think it would take a major war or depression to compel a first-rank university to engage in cutbacks or budget-slashing. But these days Barnard skimps on health care benefits for its employees like any Fortune 500 company, and Yale engages in union-busting with the best of them, pleading fiscal emergency despite endowments in the hundreds of millions. Cutting labor costs is one time-honored way to save money, of course, no matter what kind of business you're running. Some colleges and universities, however, are going even further. At the University of Chicago—home of the nuclear chain reaction and Pinochet's economic development team—plans are under way to cut back spending on financial aid by directing aid dollars from poorer to wealthier students, thereby discounting tuition prices for the well-off. Rollbacks of financial aid have taken place at many smaller private colleges, and changes in aid policy are being considered at Duke, Cornell and other large institutions. The plans in the works at the University of Chicago are representative of what's happening to financial aid at private schools across the country.

Three years ago, the University of Chicago installed a new president—Hugo Sonnenschein, academic economist turned administrator—and announced an operating budget shortfall of $9 million, which grew to $14 million in 1994. A number of reasons were given for the deficit—faculty salaries increased over the course of the 1980s, a fancy new laboratory was built on campus, research grants from the federal government didn't increase as fast as expected—but the university's concern should be taken with a grain of salt: Its $1.4 billion endowment is growing at a rate of 10-12 percent a year. The university is also affiliated with the profitable University of Chicago Hospitals and professional schools, and its current fund drive—which aims to raise $650 million by the year 2000—is only a few million dollars shy of its goal. It's hard to see how the University of Chicago is teetering on the brink of bankruptcy. Still, the new administration announced that to eliminate the deficit, some changes were in order.

This April, Sonnenschein issued a public letter to the university community. The message was pretty straightforward: The undergraduate college just isn't pulling in enough money, which is to say that Chicago undergraduates aren't yielding as much for the university as their peers at Ivy League schools. The first reason for this is that the college is smaller than the colleges in the Ivy League. The second reason, though, is that the University of Chicago spends a higher percentage of its income from undergraduate tuition on financial aid than do its "peer" institutions. Thirty-one percent of undergraduate tuition income at the University of Chicago is returned to college students as financial aid; most of the Ivy League schools have aid budgets equal to 20-25 percent of tuition income. Not that other schools are starving their students—Harvard, for example, gives out $20 million more than the University of Chicago, since it collects more money in tuition. Half of Harvard's students receive

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scholarship aid; 60 percent of University of Chicago students do. "The university has an enormous amount of money invested in financial aid," says Assistant Provost Bob Zimmer. "It's certainly not a question of reconsidering our commitment to aid, but when you're re-evaluating your financial situation you want to make sure you're not wasting such a large amount of money or using it in less than optimal ways."

Like most major private universities, the University of Chicago has had a two-part financial aid policy since the late 1960s. The first part of the policy, need-blind admission, mandates that the university admit students without looking at their parents' income. Need-blind admission is given its teeth by the second part of the policy, need-based aid: Anyone who is admitted is guaranteed the funds they'll need if they should choose to attend. Financial need is calculated on the basis of standard federal formulas; then, the financial aid office puts together a package of grants, loans, work-study money, and personal and parental contributions. As the price of tuition has ballooned from $5,100 in 1980 to $19,875 in 1995 (not counting room and board), need-based aid has ensured that the financial aid budget has grown in tandem. Need-based aid is an enormously popular policy; for many students, it's a lifeline. So how do you change admissions and aid policy to attract richer students, thereby cutting the aid budget, without admitting that you're cutting need-based aid?

Well, for starters, frame all decisions about aid in the rhetoric of intellectual excellence. Part of the problem, from the university's point of view, is that upper-middle-class students who are admitted to the university are less likely to attend than poorer students. In 1993, a Committee on Tuition Policy was appointed to study the impact of aid on a student's decision to attend the University of Chicago. It found what any high school senior anxiously awaiting an envelope containing aid decisions could have told them: Financial aid has a big impact on where you go to college. "If we're cheaper, they're more likely to come here," says Bob Topel, a Business School professor who worked on the study. Since upper-middle-class students (kids whose parents are in the $80,000-$100,000 income bracket) get the least aid, they are less likely to attend than poorer students who get more in grants. The tuition policy committee hypothesized that these students are going to less costly public universities; it's also possible that these kids applied to more places and so have a greater range of choices. Either way, upper-middle-class students who are willing to pay a high proportion of the price of tuition but not the whole $20,000 are hot property for lean and hungry administrators. But, admits Thomas Trabasso, the chair of the tuition-policy committee, if you targeted those students, "you'd be giving more money to people who need it less."

"The way aid has worked is that the administrative decision has been based solely on financial considerations, independent of grades and achievements," says Topel. "The question is whether you can use financial aid to make sure

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you get more of the students you want. You could try to get more black students, more Hispanic students, more highly qualified students." Of course, targeting aid to black students (who currently make up 4 percent of the undergraduate population) would raise questions about potential conflicts between racial preferences and merit.

Targeting aid to rich students, on the other hand, conveniently does not raise any such questions, since the committee found a clear correlation between family income and academic desirability. "Right now the most needy get the most aid," says Trabasso. "But there's a conflict between objective ability and family income. The more qualified students tend to come from wealthier family backgrounds, based on whatever criteria you want to use: SAT scores, admissions evaluations. Some people just don't want to hear that." Kids who've taken Kaplan test preparation courses and have lengthy recommendation letters from prep school English teachers are also those who are more likely to be able to pay a high percentage of the tuition bill. Thus the university can admit "brighter" kids and make more money. To that end, the committee has recommended that aid decisions ought to be made with the input of the admissions office.

If Chicago does head in this direction, it will find plenty of other colleges and universities to keep it company. An April 1 article in the *Wall Street Journal* described how a number of private colleges have begun to carefully calculate aid decisions with an eye to maximizing tuition revenue, systematically offering smaller grants to students they think are likely to attend while channeling extra aid money to more hesitant students—whether they need it or not. For example, Johns Hopkins offers smaller grants to students who say they want to be pre-meds, since the possibility of their attending the prestigious medical school is incentive enough. The school offers more aid to students in the humanities, where competition from other colleges is greater. In another example, for the past couple of years, St. Bonaventure University in New York has offered its poorest prospective students half of the grants they needed, while more affluent students have been offered extra money; as a result, 75 percent of the wealthier students chose to attend, while only one in 11 of the poorer students did.

On top of the proposals to get the admissions office involved in aid decisions, the University of Chicago's policy since 1992 has been to manage the aid budget so that it doesn't grow at a rate faster than tuition revenue. Since 1992, income from tuition has grown from $58 million to $70 million. Over that period, undergraduate financial aid—which had previously been one of the fastest growing expenditures in the university budget—only increased by $1.5 million. In 1994-5, the annual report gloated that the university had outdone its slow-growth target; spending on financial aid had increased a bare 3 percent, while revenue from undergraduate tuition went up by 9 percent. At the same time, new recruitment schemes have been designed with an eye to attracting richer kids. "The admissions people have increased the rate at which they're able to attract better qualified, more able to pay students," Trabasso says. And a marketing firm has been called in to upgrade Chicago's dour image, with an eye to luring in "higher-income kids from the suburbs who are looking for things besides just studying."

"The question is whether private institutions ought to be in the business of income redistribution," says Topel. "It's my private opinion that it's not the function of a private university to do that, and it's a question of how long we can afford to do so. When universities were relatively well-to-do, we could afford to exercise social preferences through policy. But nothing comes free." It's more than a little disingenuous to describe the University of Chicago as anything but well-to-do, and if private universities don't have public duties such as promoting income redistribution—otherwise known as equal opportunities for all—then how come they are exempt from taxes? Still, maybe Topel has a point: A fully developed public university system might well serve society better than our current, highly stratified system, even if private schools offered much more generous financial aid than they currently do. In a sense, financial aid at private schools is just another version of the Horatio Alger story, holding out the tantalizing prospect of individual advancement while social inequalities remain in place.

College education was once a privilege reserved for the children of the elite. Since the GI Bill and the subsequent expansion of the public university system, though, this has ceased to be the case: 22 percent of Americans have completed four years of college, while 17 percent have had some college education but don't hold a degree and 7 percent hold associate degrees. But despite the cacophony of liberal voices chanting that education is the cure-all for economic ills, the increase in the college population isn't a straightforward indicator of social mobility. For one thing, some people still get more education than others. White men receive bachelor's degrees at twice the rate that black men do, and while a quarter of white men 25 and older have completed four years of post-secondary schooling, only 19 percent of white women have. (Black women have about as much education as black men: 12 percent of the total black population holds a B.A.) Only half of high school seniors whose families are in the poorest third of the population go to college after graduation from high school, while 80 percent of those in the wealthiest third of the population do.

Moreover, not all degrees are created equal. The increase in the college-educated population has always been due primarily to the rapid expansion of public higher education. Since the late 1970s, however, the largest increase in the college population has been for students attending two-year colleges. Between 1970 and 1983, enrollment in two-year institutions increased by 113 percent, while enrollment in four-year colleges only went up by 22 percent. In 1991, junior college students made up 36 percent of the total college population. Students in the lowest socioeconomic quartile are

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much more likely to attend junior college than a four-year school. Junior colleges, however, are very different kinds of institutions than four-year schools; with attrition rates of 56 percent and low percentages of students going on to get a bachelor's degree, they rarely serve as bridges to four-year schools. While students who've completed a year or two of junior college have higher average salaries than people with only a high school degree, there's an earnings differential of $8,000-$10,000 between junior college graduates and people with bachelor's degrees; while real salaries have fallen for men at all education levels since 1970, they've fallen faster for both men and women with 13-15 years of education than for people with bachelor's degrees.

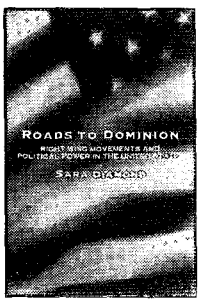
Low-income students attend junior colleges for a variety of reasons—they're closer to home, they're more understanding of the need for flexible schedules that allow for part-time work, and, most of all, they're cheaper. The rapid expansion of the junior college population is due, in part, to changes in the federal financial aid system, which have made it more difficult for low-income students to go anywhere except community college. The most important federal source of aid for college students is the Pell grant program, which began in 1972. While in 1980 the average size of a Pell grant ($882) was, amazing as it seems, enough to cover a substantial proportion of tuition at public four-year schools, today's average grant ($1,606) is only enough to cover the cost of junior college.

For families in the lowest income quintile, the average cost of education at a public university is 33 percent of family income; at a private college, it's 90 percent. Meanwhile, restrictions on access to interest-free student loans for middle-class students have been lifted; the result has been an expansion in the number of students receiving loans, while the proportion of federal student-aid recipients who get Pell grants has fallen from one-third in 1980 to one-quarter in 1993. Two and a half times more money is spent on loans than on grants.

Hermine's still struggling through the University of Chicago, working long hours at the library while trying to keep up with her schoolwork. Every year she goes through a lengthy, trying battle with the aid office, which never gives her quite enough money. After her first year at the school, she almost had to quit because of lack of funds. Hermine will graduate from the University of Chicago $25,000 in debt. If she had applied a year or two later, she might not have been able to go at all. Make no mistake, college education is one of the cornerstones of the American class system. The vast expansion of higher education in the postwar period was the fruit of economic growth and political turmoil. It's no surprise, then, that a period of economic stagnation and political retrenchment would see the defunding of public universities, the sacrifice of need-based aid at private universities and the reassertion of class privilege in the halls of the academy. ◀

Kim Phillips is a Chicago-based journalist. Her writing has appeared in the *Grey City Journal, The Baffler* and the *Washington Post.*

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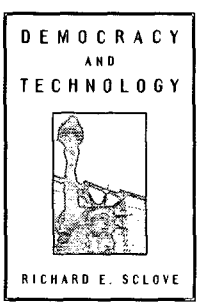


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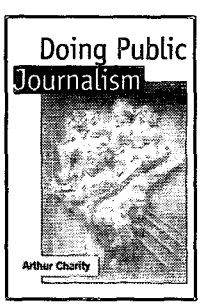


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RUSSIA

Palace intrigues

On the eve of Russia's presidential runoff, Boris Yeltsin employs devious means to shore up support among voters.

By Fred Weir
MOSCOW

Russia holds the decisive stage of voting for president on July 3, but a wave of inscrutable bureaucratic warfare might have upset all calculations of the public mood. Despite expert predictions that President Boris Yeltsin's re-election was assured following his narrow lead over Communist challenger Gennady Zyuganov in the first round, the Yeltsin administration found itself convulsed by fierce infighting within days of the June 16 election. "We see mounting evidence of fear, and even desperation, in the Kremlin after the first-round results," says John Helmer, political columnist for the English-language *Moscow Tribune*. "There is a sense of things coming unstuck that belies the triumphal official rhetoric."

One source of discord at the top was an unexpectedly bad showing for the incumbent. Yeltsin's 35 percent of the vote fell far short of the nearly 60 percent that carried him to first-round victory in 1991, and the 58 percent he garnered in an April 1993 referendum on citizens' "trust" in the president. Fully a third of the electorate voted for Zyuganov, whose campaign decried the economic and social wreckage left by Yeltsin's four-year-old market reforms and promised more state intervention to put people back to work, protect domestic industry, and invest in social infrastructure. Another third of the voters backed a range of also-ran candidates, including authoritarian nationalist Alexander Lebed, who placed third with 14.5 percent of the vote; liberal Grigory Yavlinsky (7.3 percent); flamboyant ultranationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky (5.7 percent); social democrat Svyatoslav Fyodorov (1 percent); and former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev (0.5 percent).

If Yeltsin hopes to defeat Zyuganov in the July runoff, he needs to retain his current support—much of which is extremely soft—and pick up some 15 million new votes. In a post-election TV address, Yeltsin argued that Russians who supported losing candidates were anti-Communists who will fall naturally into his camp for the second round. But many observers have doubts. Some of the third candidates were supporters of market reforms, others were not. Surveys show that supporters of these candidates could redirect their allegiances in unexpected ways in the runoff election, or choose not to vote at all. "One thing all the losing candidates had in common was a harsh rejection of Yeltsin and his policies of the past four years, particularly the war in Chechnya," says Helmer. "The inescapable bottom line is that two-thirds of the electorate deserted Yeltsin in the first round, and no one can say with certainty what they will do in the second."

Voters aren't likely to warm to Yeltsin's heavy-handed political intrigues. In his most dramatic post-election move, Yeltsin sacked Defense Minister Pavel Grachev—the Yeltsin regime's most unpopular figure, accused of corruption and incompetent prosecution of the war in Chechnya—and brought losing presidential candidate Lebed onto his team with the extraordinary portfolio of "security supremo."

"It was a great piece of political theater, designed to show Lebed's 11 million voters that their favorite has been incorporated into the Yeltsin regime and that he is already shaking things up," says Yevgeny Paschentsev, a political scientist at Moscow Peoples Friendship University. "Yeltsin's real purpose was to get Lebed into the Kremlin and take over his voters, while neutralizing him politically."

Yeltsin has broadly hinted that Lebed could be his

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chosen successor and has pledged to give him sweeping powers to crack down on Russia's rampant criminals and corrupt government officials. "But Lebed is a loose cannon," Paschentsev says. "He is not a democrat, and his commitment to market reforms is tenuous to say the least. His enthusiastic desire to fight crime and sweep away corruption must have made many in Yeltsin's inside circle tremble."

Lebed, a hero of the war in Afghanistan and Russia's most popular military officer, was cashiered from the army by Yeltsin a year ago because of his constant forays into politics. The maverick general's public musings have included praise for former Chilean military dictator Augusto Pinochet: "He killed 3,000 people but restored order to the country. It was worth it." Or more general praise for dictatorial methods: "In Russia we shall have to build democracy by authoritarian means."

"There is no way Lebed is the poster boy of democracy, though the Yeltsin regime—with much of the Western media in tow—is currently presenting him that way," says Helmer. "This is a brief marriage of convenience, but Lebed is a very unpredictable man, and he is as likely to be a source of disaster for Yeltsin as he is to deliver electoral dividends."

Within days of Lebed's arrival, the Kremlin was seized by a full-scale purge of the security apparatus. In a still-murky episode that involved the dramatic arrest and release of two Yeltsin campaign managers accused of leaving a government building with $500,000 in undocumented cash, two conservative security officials were stripped of their posts and the recently disgraced former privatization czar and free-market liberal Anatoly Chubais—fired by Yeltsin only last January—was restored to the inner Kremlin circle. "The scene reminds us of Winston Churchill's remark that Kremlin power struggles are like watching dogs fight under a carpet," says Paschentsev. "You never know what happened until the winners emerge into the light. What we are watching is basically a subterranean battle for the president's ear. And it is far from over."

The unexpected victims of the imbroglio were Yeltsin's personal security chief, Alexander Korzhakov, who publicly called for canceling the presidential elections in the name of "social stability"; Mikhail Barsukov, head of the Federal Security Service (former KGB); and Oleg Soskovets, first deputy prime minister in charge of the military-industrial complex.

Lebed's role in the purge of security leaders remains hotly disputed among Moscow watchers, but—at least until the elections—his star is clearly on the rise. "No one can say for sure whether the power that was given to Lebed to attract votes for the president is real or whether it will last," says liberal parliamentarian Anatoly Shabad. "What is certain, though, is that two bears cannot live in one den, and it is unlikely that Yeltsin would go into hibernation if re-elected and leave Lebed as regent."

The mainstream Russian press interpreted the power struggle's outcome as a victory for the long-suffering liberal faction in Yeltsin's entourage and a defeat for the conservative "party of war," which many hold responsible for starting the Chechnya conflict, encouraging the president's authoritarian inclinations, and complicating market reforms. "With those men in power, controlling access to the president, there was little reason to hope a second Yeltsin term would be more enlightened than his first," editorialized the English-language *Moscow Times*, the main voice of Russia's resident foreign business community. With the defeat of the Kremlin hard-liners, the *Times* continued, "suddenly the possibility is there to break the vicious circle of corruption and the secretive execution of unchecked power that has so hampered Russia over the past years."

However, that view—besides neatly relieving Yeltsin of blame for everything done in his name over the past four years—could be deeply mistaken. "Despite a facade of democracy, Russia's form of government remains basically autocratic," says Andrei Kolganov, a Moscow University political scientist. "It is sort of traditional in Russia. The czar is untouchable, he is beyond criticism. So if things go wrong, it must be the fault of bad advisers. It follows that if you replace them with good advisers, everything will be OK."

Like the czars before him, Kolganov argues, Yeltsin is hardly a well-meaning hostage to his powerful courtiers—he's very much in charge. "Yeltsin is manipulating the various factions around him, playing them off against each other in order to instill fear and reinforce his own authority," he says. "A bad election result compelled him to stage a bit of semi-public drama, to elevate these ones, sacrifice those. But the net result is that the autocratic system is strengthened, and democracy suffers another blow."

That view is shared by Sergei Kovalyov, Yeltsin's estranged human rights commissioner and one of Russia's few liberals to have refused to compromise with the Kremlin's high-pressure election tactics. "The president's team led an election campaign that was built on fear—fear of the Communists," Kovalyov wrote in the weekly *Moskovskiye Novosti*. "The results of the first round are therefore not surprising: The president is being propped up not by a liberal but by a general, a champion of a 'strong arm.' The result of all this trading will inevitably be a stronger tendency of the authorities to act in undemocratic ways."

How Russia's voters will react to all this on July 3 remains an open question. Yeltsin's handlers clearly hope the public will buy the image of the Good Czar cleaning house, renewing his team and promising to finally set things right. But others warn that the disarray in the Kremlin could have the opposite effect. "Any intrigue around the throne is very dangerous," says Otto Latsis, a commentator for the liberal *Izvestia*. "The whole country might easily slip on it like on a watermelon rind."

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LABOR

Suppliers and demands

As they begin contract negotiations with the Big Three automakers, the United Auto Workers face a threat from non-union outsourcing.

By John Lippert
DETROIT

"Quit." That's what J.T. Battenberg can do to repair his tattered credibility with the United Auto Workers (UAW). That, at least, is what UAW President Stephen Yokich said, as he opened contract talks with General Motors on June 12.

Battenberg runs Delphi Automotive Systems, GM's far-flung parts-making empire. His job is to reduce the cost of parts supplied to GM and to outside companies, even if that means manufacturing them overseas or discarding some of the company's own workers and factories. Yokich says he doesn't oppose cost-cutting per se, but he wants clear ground rules. Battenberg, he said, "absolutely does not stay the course"—that is, live up to his agreements with the UAW.

This kind of friction can be expensive. In March, the UAW shut down a Dayton, Ohio brake plant for 17 days, in a dispute over whether GM had promised to build next-generation anti-lock brakes at the plant. The walkout's impact quickly rippled, shutting down two dozen GM assembly plants in three countries. In Janesville, Wis., where GM builds its hot-selling Suburban models, plant officials scoured local auto parts stores, looking for parts to keep assembly lines running.

Sean McAlinden, a labor analyst at the University of Michigan, believes the chances of full-blown labor conflict at GM this fall are 50-50—that is, higher than at any time since the 67-day strike in 1970.

The potential for conflict at GM could be even greater in Canada. Since it split from the UAW a decade ago, the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) has escaped the brunt of GM's downsizing, in part because Canada's national health plan means total labor costs are lower than in the United States. The CAW has been reeling in the last year, however, not just because of sharp attacks from the conservative government in Ontario but also because GM has put three parts plants up for sale and is planning to eliminate thousands of other jobs due to soaring productivity.

But storm clouds are gathering in both countries because GM is reconsidering its relatively high degree of vertical integration. The company now builds more of its own parts than any car company in the world. Forty-five percent of its North American production dollars are spent inside its own factories, compared to 38 percent at Ford and 34 percent at Chrysler, according to Dan Luria of the University of Michigan's Industrial Technology Institute. This is in many ways a competitive advantage. The Ohio plant, for example, makes money for GM by selling brakes to Chrysler. Here's the rub: In 1995, Big Three autoworkers received $20.69 in base wages, while the average U.S. manufacturing worker received just 60 percent of that amount, or $12.45. This gap is more than enough, McAlinden says, to give Detroit executives an incentive to shift investment to lower-wage plants.

This wage gap explains, in part, why GM has been reluctant to upgrade some of its Delphi parts-making plants, and why 12 of these plants are now listed on an official "endangered species" list. If the UAW loses these jobs, plus additional jobs due to improving productivity, it could lose 35,000 GM jobs in the next six years, McAlinden says. That's on top of the 150,000 jobs that have disappeared since 1985.

During the 1996 talks, the UAW will attempt to save jobs by negotiating contract language that permits strikes when automakers outsource work to shops that are less competitive than UAW plants. It will try to restrict overtime, thereby forcing the companies to hire new workers. It will also seek tighter contractual limits on how low the level

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of employment can drop.

The companies, particularly GM, will fight hard to preserve their control over investment decisions. They will press the union to relax work rules and allow round-the-clock manufacturing without overtime pay.

The main problem for the UAW in 1996 is that the wage gap between its members and the rest of American manufacturing workers is now so great that changes in traditional contracts may not be enough to save jobs. As one GM official remarked, "They made a decision they're not going to trade jobs for wage concessions, and now the goddamn jobs are gone." The union can bend only so much. As a Canadian Auto Workers official put it: "I don't think the difference between $20 and $17 an hour is going to make much difference. If they're talking about going from $20 to $10 an hour, I don't think the union can accommodate that."

That's why the UAW's Yokich added another subtext to the bargaining: He said he wants to improve pay and conditions for workers in outside parts factories, not just inside Big Three plants. This is not a new issue in UAW-Big Three bargaining, but it's never before been a top priority. According to top union officials, the UAW plans to press Detroit automakers to require suppliers to make it easier for parts workers to organize, by promising neutrality during union drives or by accepting "card checks." In this latter procedure, unions are recognized after a simple showing that a majority of workers have signed union cards, rather than after a lengthy campaign and voting process in which employers often use harsh anti-union tactics.

The union will also demand that the Big Three adopt a "prevailing wage" rule for work that's shipped to an outside company. Under such a rule, work couldn't be "outsourced" to a company where workers receive lower wages and benefits than UAW workers.

Detroit officials dismiss the UAW's concern about non-union suppliers. Thomas Brown, executive director of union affairs at Ford, said flatly, "We can't interfere with the labor relations of another company." Robert Kramer, vice president of human resources, struck a more coy note, saying Ford is proud of its collaborative relations with the UAW. Ford officials, he said, "do point out to suppliers the advantages we've had over the years in having that sort of relationship. We make the assumption that that relationship will help them, too."

The UAW now represents 100,000 independent parts workers, compared to 400,000 two decades ago. Fewer than two in 10 independent parts workers belong to unions today, compared to two of three in the 1970s. Several trends contributed to that drop, including anti-labor policies in Washington, an overall shift in investment from manufacturing to service industries, and the recent arrival in the United States of hundreds of non-union German and Japanese supplier plants.

Analysts like McAlinden say emphatically that the UAW is dead if it doesn't boost its organizing efforts, thereby creating upward pressure on parts-plant wages. He credits the UAW with recognizing this. The union tripled its organizing budget in the last year, to $10 million annually. More resources are coming, as the union opens a half-dozen organizing centers in places like Tennessee, Texas and Pennsylvania. Big UAW locals will soon be asked to match the international UAW's organizing expenditures on a dollar-for-dollar basis. The proposed merger between the UAW, the Machinists and the Steelworkers should provide a boost.

Already these efforts are bearing some fruit. Workers at Johnson Controls seat plants in Plymouth, Mich., and Oberlin, Ohio, recently joined the UAW after a majority signed union cards. Traditionally a tough UAW foe, the company dropped its opposition to union recognition at these two plants, however, as part of a three-way deal, which shifted the seat work from an Ohio Ford plant to Johnson Controls. "The UAW is not going to take a hard line on outsourcing," McAlinden says, "if the work is going to a UAW plant."

Workers at United Globe Nippon, which makes sound-deadening panels for Japanese transplants, voted to join the UAW on May 14. Leaders from nearby UAW locals in and around Chicago played a key role in the organizing effort. The UAW is now surveying workers at four Dana Corp. plants to see if they're interested in signing union cards.

Still, many suppliers are waging determined anti-union campaigns. Recent UAW drives at the Donnelly Corp., in Holland, Mich., and at Mexican Industries, in Detroit, were defeated soundly. The accelerating shakeout among suppliers, including the recent merger of Lucas Industries PLC and Varity Corp., could reduce the number of organizing targets for the union, but it could also make each of those targets much more formidable.

The UAW has sometimes been forced to resort to stronger tactics. On May 24, union members marched through a Riverview, Mich., factory belonging to Materials Processing Inc., and then blocked its driveway for 90 minutes. The plant's 220 workers had voted to join the UAW in April. Forty union supporters were fired prior to the vote, and the company has thrown up procedural roadblocks that continue to keep the union out.

The workers, mostly African-Americans, earn $7 to $11 an hour. They're often required to work seven days a week, 12 hours a day. The plant's roof leaks, and workers say the heat is inadequate. When workers leave the plant, they're often covered with the same material the factory uses to coat gas tanks for Ford, Chrysler, Auto Alliance, American Axle and Kelsey Hayes.

William Klingel, the company's owner, declined to comment. UAW officials, from Yokich on down, say that if they can't get owners like Klingel to bargain soon—either by organizing his workers or pressuring his Big Three customers—the very existence of the union may soon be in jeopardy. ◀

John Lippert is the *Detroit Free Press* labor writer and a member of Newspaper Guild Local 22.

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DIALOGUE

Social Text and reality

By Bruce Robbins

Your June 10 editorial has a few choice things to say about "the intentionally obscure journal *Social Text*." I've been co-editor of *Social Text* for the past five years, so I guess my intentions are pertinent here. What can I say? It's all true. We *are* intentionally obscure. That way no one can tell how politically irrelevant and intellectually empty our articles really are. Edward Said on Zionism's victims, Fredric Jameson on what's wrong with cultural studies, Julie Beattie on what's good about *Roseanne*, Andrew Ross on the limits of Al Gore's commitment to ecology, Ellen Messer-Davidow on how the right funds its intellectuals—how else can anybody describe such essays except as dogmatic poststructuralism motivated by "academic one-upsmanship"? How clever of your editorialist to have found us out.

But seriously, folks. Is there any excuse for writing about the intentions of allies in this appallingly condescending and irresponsible way? As a subscriber to *In These Times* for many years, I didn't expect this sort of sectarianism.

Yes, *Social Text* fell for Alan Sokal's hoax, and it doesn't feel good. But the real lessons of this episode are not the ones you find either in the mainstream media or in your editorial. *Social Text* was hoaxed not because we liked Sokal's jargon-filled references to postmodern authorities—in fact, we asked him to cut them out—but because we thought he was a progressive scientist, a physicist who was willing to be publicly critical of scientific orthodoxies. Now we find ourselves accused of positively relishing a style of prose that none of us actually writes in. Anyone who thinks this stuff is characteristic of *Social Text* is invited to read the rest of the "Science Wars" issue, from which Sokal's prank has unfortunately diverted attention.

Careers are advanced as readily by trashing the academy or cultural studies as by participating in them—in fact, a lot more readily, since trashing gets more attention and takes less work.

You will not find the authors assuming that the revolution will happen by means of witty wordplay or that the physical universe doesn't exist.

So what can be learned from the embarrassing fact that, overeager to welcome what we thought was a conveniently credentialed ally, we let Sokal's article through? That we should make more allowance for our fallibility; that's for sure. But not that the project of cultural studies is inherently flawed or that there should be a return to the apolitical ideal of scholarly disinterestedness. Or, on the contrary, that human liberation requires the abolition of professional credentials.

Tom Frank's May 27 article takes professionalism as the heart of the Sokal affair. When Stanley Fish talks of a breach of professional good faith, Frank says, what is exposed is the actual dependence on professional privilege, exclusiveness and career-making that is otherwise disguised by *Social Text*'s left posturing. Deep down, we are nothing but self-serving careerists.

My own view of professionalism, which is not shared by everyone on the staff of *Social Text*, is that fighting to change professional standards and agendas is a significant political activity, and that being against professions as such (or against disciplines or expertise as such) is not a left-wing position and never has been. This means I'm more reluctant than Frank to point the finger. There is sleazy, opportunistic career-making out there, but it's not easy to distinguish from normal scholarship, or from normal journalism. Everyone wants to be on the side of the angels, and what easier way to strike an angelic pose than by accusing someone else of being a member of an elite enclave that is conspiring against the layman? Careers are advanced as readily by trashing the academy or cultural studies as by participating in them—in fact, a lot more readily, since trashing gets more attention and takes less work.

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Note the career paths of Katie Roiphe, Russell Jacoby, Dinesh D'Souza. Perhaps the ever-reversible charge of careerism isn't after all a very reliable or desirable way of indicating that you like some ideas better than others.

Professional deformation exists—in the academy as in journalism—and the academic left is certainly not immune from it. In the humanities, for example, this means tending to favor explanations that give culture a juicy role. On occasion it means ignorant harangues against science that treat scientists like positivist dolts, which most of them assuredly are not. But none of the above can be charged to cultural studies or French theory. It was Matthew Arnold, after all, who defined culture by setting it against science and business. The academic left has paid a price for its compromise with Arnold. But that compromise also explains how the humanities have come to serve as a refuge for left-wing ideas.

Trying to make history under circumstances not of our choosing, we all make compromises. A saintly renunciation of all worldliness and ambition is fortunately not a prerequisite for left-wing intellectual work. How many saints are there?

Along with professionalism, the other substantive issue here is cultural politics. A more accurate term for what *Social Text* is up to than post-structuralism or cultural studies—though it overlaps with both—cultural politics has been attacked on the left for its epistemological relativism, its willful neglect of class, its divisiveness. These are real and large issues, and I can't resolve them. But let me try to stake out some common ground.

Almost nobody on the left, I think, occupies the extreme epistemological positions of either space-cadet idealism or dumb-as-a-post positivism. Most of us would agree that different groups suffering different sorts of injustice will see the world differently, both from their rulers and from each other, and that their perspectives deserve more respect than they get. That much "epistemological relativism" is just common sense. From this point on, there are lots of legitimate questions, such as how far to distinguish the natural from the human sciences and how to adjudicate between conflicting versions of oppression. But recourse to "reality" or "metanarratives" can't save us from this complexity. Most of us don't refuse metanarratives; we try to deal with the fact that there's more than one. Out of a pool of conflicting realities, we refuse to say that only one is real and the rest aren't. The problem is too much respect for reality, not too little.

Cultural politics doesn't entail either a disabling fragmentation of the left or forgetting about class. As a rule, it gathers people and groups who are trying to deconstruct the same identities they also rely on. (This, by the way, is one of the places where French theory has been of immediate practical value to Americans dealing with our unique mix of race and ethnicity, sex and gender.) Affirmations of cultural identity are no more characteristic of the multicultural left than the questioning of such identities, which opens them up to enterprises of common-language creation and coalition-building—around a shared economic exploitation, for example.

Promoting radical economic redistribution is arguably the most urgent task facing the left, today as yesterday. But that is precisely why cultural politics is so very important. You can't even begin to comprehend the economic disadvantages of blacks and women, say, if you don't take cultural factors into account (for example, the gendered line between paid "productive" work and unpaid housework). Doing something about it, making redistribution even imaginable to a majority of people, let alone making them feel it's worthy of their support—this is the sort of project for which you can't have too much cultural analysis or understanding. ◀

Bruce Robbins is co-editor of *Social Text* and a professor of English and comparative literature at Rutgers University.



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IN THE ARTS

The pleasures of subtlety

Nelly and Monsieur Arnaud *achieves emotional resonance through the distance between what seems and what is.*

By Linda DeLibero

Nelly and Monsieur Arnaud is Claude Sautet's 14th feature film—not exactly prolific for a director whose career spans five decades. But after toiling long years in the shadow of his more famous New Wave contemporaries, Sautet's measured pace has at last yielded rich and unexpected rewards. At one time, Sautet's films, when they were seen at all in this country, were tagged as little more than bourgeois confections, craftily contrived, only a half-step up from the haute trash of Claude Lelouch (*A Man and a Woman*). Worse, they were unapologetically personal and generally sunny, at a time when Americans only went to French films for politics or *l'amour fou*. Along with the disciplined craftsmanship he's been perfecting for years, Sautet has finally developed a moral gravity that rivals anything the New Wave (with which he refused to be identified) ever produced. Somehow, he's become a master filmmaker.

Like *Un Coeur en Hiver* (1991), the film that ended Sautet's long spell of near-anonymity in America, *Nelly and Monsieur Arnaud* achieves emotional resonance through the slow accretion of seemingly casual detail, through words left unsaid, through the distance between what seems—or what should be—and what is. It's as if Henry James had decided to take up moviemaking. The story, on paper, is slight. Nelly (Emmanuelle Béart), a young woman fed up with her unemployed husband's indolence, meets Arnaud (Michel Serrault), the friend and former lover of Nelly's woman friend. A wealthy retired businessman, Arnaud offers Nelly the money to pay her back rent, but she politely refuses. Back home, though, she presents the idea to her husband as a fait accompli. When he barely blinks at this arrangement, she asks for a divorce and takes the check from Arnaud.

Thereupon commences the odd, unnameable relationship between Arnaud, who is near the end of his life, and Nelly, who, thanks to him, is finally beginning hers. She takes a job typing his memoirs, an account of his early career as a colonial magistrate in the Leeward Islands. Their work sessions take on the quality of a slow, polite seduction. Arnaud is clearly smitten; Nelly is intrigued. But consummation is unthinkable. There's convention—the man is old enough to be her grandfather—and the unspoken matter of the money. Mostly, though, there's the unyielding, implacable solitude of each of these characters. Nelly becomes involved with Vincent (Jean-Hugues Anglade), Arnaud's young publisher, largely, we discern, to work off her feelings for Arnaud. Eventually Vincent asks her to live with him; Nelly refuses, and Vincent, in a fit of pride, breaks off the relationship. Nelly proceeds with her divorce. Arnaud leaves for an extended trip with the wife he's been separated from for 20 years. Nelly and Arnaud part. *Finis.*

In lesser hands—or perhaps in Sautet's earlier work—this little story of Parisian angst might have become a soap opera. But Sautet has learned to keep the camera still and the dialogue clear of melodrama, allowing us to see and hear for ourselves what plays beneath the surface of these ordinary lives. Most of what we understand of the characters' intentions and desires we must glean from careful attention to facial expression, to the turn of a phrase, to the stray detail in a frame. When Nelly offers to massage the elderly man's aching back, we briefly see a closeup of her fingers kneading his sagging flesh. The moment, with its curious mixture of innocence and intimacy, forces us to acknowledge our own discomfort with the notion of age

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Michel Serrault and Emmanuelle Béart in *Nelly and Monsieur Arnaud*, directed by Claude Sautet.

and passion; finally, the image strips us of our conventional response, and we're left to contemplate what it means in this particular context. Afterwards, Arnaud rewards Nelly with dinner at a posh restaurant, where his business associates and their wives peer at the couple across the room's expanse. They think they know what they're seeing; Nelly comments that they doubtless believe she's a whore. In these small ways, Sautet quietly discloses the trap we fall into when we fail to perceive the ambiguity of human relations. In short, he does what all great directors ultimately do: He teaches us to see.

It's difficult to think of any contemporary filmmaker who works in quite this way; at any rate, few today can afford to assume so much patience and attentiveness in their audiences. It's a pity, because the subtle satisfactions of this method are numerous. Always known as an actor's director, Sautet has coaxed from Michel Serrault (known mostly in this country for his role in *La Cage aux Folles*) a performance that quietly plays on his status as an icon of French cinema—and of the French past. An old colonial boy, Arnaud is both regretful of the darker parts of his own history and angry that there's so much he needs to apologize for. There's plenty of room for sentiment in this portrait of an aging patriarch, but neither Serrault nor the film yields to it. Emmanuelle Béart, here minus the hothouse gloss of her character in *Un Coeur en Hiver*, uses her unearthly beauty to suggest a woman for whom all things are possible—clearly everyone in the film is in love with her—but who refuses to accept such bounty on principle. With her rueful smile and clean-scrubbed face, she sets off to pursue her freedom like a pilgrim who knows the promised land is pure illusion. When asked repeatedly by various friends whether she'll really divorce, she responds unhesitatingly that it's for the best; nevertheless, you get the feeling that she knows the change will hardly matter to her happiness. And this, finally, is the bond that Nelly and Arnaud share. Although a deep gulf of history and experience separates them, both understand the power of unseen and unalterable limits.

The interiority of a film like *Nelly and Monsieur Arnaud* is the opposite of what we're used to seeing in popular culture, which traffics in surfaces, limitless vistas and unbridled fantasy. Even independent cinema today can't tackle the incongruities of ordinary life without the requisite wink and a nudge, and the improbable happy ending. In fact, it's questionable whether *Nelly and Monsieur Arnaud*, which is even more pared down and nuanced than *Un Coeur en Hiver*, will find much of an audience in this country. That would be a shame, not only because such movies remind us that film is every bit as capable of deft, intelligent expression as any other form of art, but because if Sautet continues to make films like these, there ought to be someplace—other than the video screen—where we can see them. ◀

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IN PRINT

Reclaiming King

By David Chappell

One of the most heated issues in the politics of historical memory is the allegiance right-wingers now claim with Martin Luther King Jr., who, they emphasize, advocated a "color-blind society." That phrase—attributed to King and the "original" civil rights movement—has become a mantra for opponents of affirmative action, though King is on record supporting affirmative action as a way to move toward a color-blind society.

A more determined recasting of King's legacy has occupied the other end of the ideological spectrum, where radical black nationalists are claiming an allegiance to King that they never felt when King was alive. The black nationalist revision of King has had much more influence on mainstream publications and academic discussion of civil rights. It is just as misleading as the "color-blind" King created by the right wing.

Back in the 1960s, black "militants" made great sport of King—the Reverend Chicken Wing, as Malcolm X called him. Eldridge Cleaver's 1968 bestseller, *Soul on Ice*, said that the "emasculated" James Baldwin was full of self-hatred partly because he could not have a white man's baby and "embod[ied] in his art the self-flagellating policy of Martin Luther King."

King has remained a prominent, if no longer ridiculous, figure to black nationalists. Vincent Harding, probably the most thoughtful and historically knowledgeable black nationalist today, began a reassessment of King about 10 years after King's death. Harding defended King—and dissociated himself—from the denunciations of the '60s militants. King knew, Harding told a symposium at the University of Mississippi in 1978, "that he was being falsely identified as an 'Uncle Tom' by many Northern black rhetoricians of revolution who had never once risked their lives as King had done so many times in the cause of his people's freedom."

Yet Harding got in his licks. King became, Harding says, "a tool for defusing" the movement. By "allow[ing] himself to be convinced" that it was unwise to shut down Washington with mass demonstrations while Congress was considering a civil rights bill in 1963, King "produced the one-day, unthreatening March on Washington." For this and other failures, Harding says, King was "the best friend white folks ever had."

But Harding claimed that King began to come to his senses near the end of his life—something that nationalists never said at the time. In the debate over establishing a national King holiday, Harding wrote in *Sojourners* in January 1983 that America "enshrined the King of 1963"—an immature King who still had faith that America could solve its racial problems voluntarily. Harding enshrines a later King, who was radicalized after 1965, he says, partly because "courageous and radical spokespersons like Malcolm X and the leaders of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee," among others, raised "the cry of black power."

Harding's notion of the early King ignores King's long-standing pessimistic view of human nature, expressed as early as 1951, when King wrote that liberalism's "particular sort of optimism has been discredited by the brutal logic of events." Far from "assured progress in wisdom and decency," King wrote that "man faces the ever present possibility of swift relapse not merely to animalism but to such calculated cruelty as no other animal can practice. ... Maybe man is more of a sinner than liberals are willing to admit." In a 1955 speech denouncing Negro leaders who accept segregation as "mental slaves," King rejected passive, other-worldly religion: "You must do more than pray and read the Bible to destroy segregation and second-class citizenship—you must do something about it."

Harding says King's late, more militant positions were what led the FBI to put King under constant surveillance. But the FBI began investigating King in 1961. As Harding notes in a later article in *Sojourners*, the assistant director of the FBI said King was "the most dangerous Negro in America" in 1963.

The nationalist theologian James Cone develops Harding's interpretation into a more extreme and influential version of King's ideological evolution. In a 1986 piece for the *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, Cone went so far as to say, "King moved from an optimistic integrationist to a temporary separatist." To deepen King's blackness, Cone emphasizes not just the influence of young militants but the childhood influences of the black church. Cone complains that most scholars overemphasize the influence of the "white" thinkers King read in graduate school and ignore the tradition in which King grew up. "The black church," he says, "was much more decisive in determining his theology even though he seldom referred to it." When asked to trace the course of his intellectual development, Cone says King would cite "Mahatma Gandhi, Reinhold

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Niebuhr and Walter Rauschenbusch."

For Cone, the source of misunderstanding is that "the question usually came from the white community." King answered "by appealing to intellectual sources that were regarded as persuasive authorities" by white people, Cone wrote in *Theology Today* in 1984. "King seldom had to defend his perspective to black people," Cone says, though "when he was required, as with the advocates of Black Power, white intellectual resources were never mentioned,



RICH MICHELL

because that would have been a sure way to lose the argument." Yet in the source Cone names to support this, King does refer to Hegel, Cicero and Gandhi.

The overall picture these scholars paint is of a young King who believed in non-violence because he had a naive faith in white people's goodness, and a late King who believed in "coercive" strategies because white people failed year after year to live up to his naive expectations. In doing this, they misrepresent the influence of the pessimistic theologian Reinhold Niebuhr. David Garrow, another King scholar, admits Niebuhr strongly influenced the early King, but ignores Niebuhr's crucial analysis of non-violence. Niebuhr rejected "pacifism" as naive but did so to contrast it with the "realistic" strategy he favored: the "coercive" use of non-violent force. King, in his graduate school writings about Niebuhr and his 1958 book, followed Niebuhr almost to the letter. Garrow and Cone imply that the emphasis on "coercion" is a departure from non-violence, but the late King, like the early King, always thought of his brand of non-violence as "coercive."

Cone's claim that the black church was "decisive" in determining King's theology is not in itself objectionable or even debatable. But, in seeking to elevate the black church, Cone views it as more monolithic than it has been and exaggerates its philosophical distinctness from the "white" thinkers King cited as important to his own development.

Cone says that whenever King faced a crisis, he "turned to the faith contained in the tradition of the black church." The "reason" that King never yielded to despair, he argues, "is not found in his intellectual grasp and exposition of white liberal theology but in the faith and the life of the black church." The only support Cone offers for this claim is the fact that King was "the son of a Baptist preacher." Yet in King's own account of his most severe spiritual "crisis," he said: "Something said to me, you can't call on daddy now; he's in Atlanta, a hundred seventy-five miles away. ... You've got to call on that something, on that person that our daddy used to tell you about, that power that can make a way out of no way." King never suggests that the God on whom he called was different from the God on whom white Christians called. Still, to Cone, it is "black faith that enabled him to overcome crisis moments."

David Garrow was the first prominent white scholar to lend himself to the effort to make King's ideas exclusively black. Writing in the *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* in 1986, Garrow developed Cone's claim that King spoke differently to white and black audiences. But the only evidence Garrow offers to support Cone's claim that other scholars "do not adequately appreciate ... King's upbringing in ... the strong faith heritage of the black Southern Baptist Church" is an excerpt from King's "Autobiography of Religious Development," written for a class at Crozer Seminary in 1950. Garrow quotes King as saying in this essay that his "call" to preach was not "miraculous or supernatural":

> It was an inner urge calling me to serve humanity. I guess the influence of my father also had a great deal to do with my going in the ministry. This is not to say that he ever spoke to me in terms of being a minister, but that my admiration for him was the great moving factor. He set forth a noble example that I didn't mind following.

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Garrow omits the very next line of this essay, however, where King says, "Today I differ a great deal with my father theologically." King does not refer to the faith of his father and other authorities from his youth as "black" or "Negro," but rather as "fundamentalist":

> None of my teachers ever doubted the infallibility of the Scriptures. Most of them were unlettered and had never heard of biblical criticism. Naturally I accepted the teachings as they were being given to me. ... But this uncritical attitude could not last long, for it was contrary to the very nature of my being.

King added that in college, meaning the all-black Morehouse College, "the shackles of fundamentalism were removed from my body." King apparently did not draw the line that Garrow and Cone draw between the "black" world of his childhood and the "white" world of Crozer and graduate school at Boston University. The important line for King is between the "fundamentalist" teaching of childhood and the critical method that he learned *before* Crozer and BU.

Perhaps the most important part of Cone's myth of King's 11th-hour radicalization concerns the development of class consciousness. At first, according to Cone, King saw racism as just a "moral dilemma," but toward the end of his life, he saw it as "more complex" and "started to connect racism with class issues."

Cone ignores King's autobiographical essay of 1950, which explains what King called "my present anticapitalist feelings." He also ignores King's 1958 recollection in *Stride Toward Freedom* that by his early teens he had "learned that the inseparable twin of racial injustice was economic injustice." The "economic insecurity" and "tragic poverty of those living around me" were always on his mind. In his late teens, he writes, "I saw economic injustice firsthand, and realized that the poor white was exploited just as much as the Negro. Through these early experiences, I grew up deeply conscious of the varieties of injustice in our society." The book also includes King's statements about the limitations of capitalism and sympathetic statements about Marx, all of which show that King's awareness of class did not develop only in his later life.

Cone, Garrow and other influential academics who follow their lead are not troubled by the inconsistencies in their account of King's trajectory. They assume that a "black church tradition" can be summed up in a consistent theological program, distinct from and unaffected by other Christian traditions. They assume that the "white" church had a specifically white message, which was impervious to the ideological currents and waves of religious enthusiasm that ran through black churches. They assume that King's own brand of prophetic, hope-based Protestantism—which was skeptical of liberal optimism and supported an active social role for the church in this world—gained nothing from contact with various faiths of the "white" church or various schools of "white" theologians. They assume that the historical categories of Christian theology can be reduced to the racial and cultural lines drawn in mid-20th-century American politics.

The whole project of reclaiming King had its origins in the resentment that black nationalist intellectuals felt about how King was considered a hero. When the resentment mellowed, some twisted the hero's life to conform with their own prejudices, and to make him *their* hero—a sort of "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em" approach. King himself warned against elevating mere men to such exalted status. Four months before he died, he told the largely black audience at the church in which he had grown up: "You don't need to go out this morning saying that Martin Luther King is a saint. Oh no, I want you to know this morning that I am a sinner like all of God's children."

King was not perfectly black any more than he was perfectly virtuous. The irony of the effort to make King into a militant revolutionary at the end of his life is that it concedes the basic point made by those who oppose affirmative action and other acknowledgments of America's history of racial injustice: that there was *ever* a popular black leader named Martin Luther King who believed that capitalism was likeable, that white people—or any other people—are basically good, and that racist institutions and other social evils should be allowed to evolve on their own without political intervention. ◀

David Chappell is the author of *Inside Agitators: White Southerners in the Civil Rights Movement*. The paperback edition was issued in April by Johns Hopkins University Press.



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The intersection of nationalism and gender

By **Karen Rosenberg**

After the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, crude Marxism was replaced by an often equally simplistic nationalism in Eastern Europe. In fact, the second "ism" is in some respects a product of the first: By paying only lip service to ethnic groups who felt themselves disadvantaged (both culturally and economically), communists in power helped to create the nationalist explosions of the 1990s. If nationalism had been allowed a voice earlier, it might not have had to scream later.

But nationalism is an old Achilles heel of the European left. Its weak internationalism collapsed in World War I, when each warring country demanded the patriotic support of socialists, and got it (with only a few exceptions). For socialists, "Proletarians of the World Unite!" became a pious wish, contrasting with the reality of national laws that kept people divided. The left still lags way behind multinational capitalism in its ability to act globally.

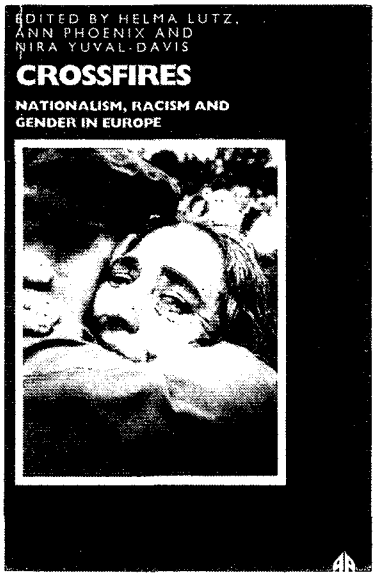
Feminists, appealing to sisterhood, likewise have been slow to appreciate nationalism's potent force. They have decried nationalism in the Balkans, yet few have tried to understand its seductiveness for women as well as men. In *Crossfires*, an anthology of eight essays by feminist scholars, the editors have opened a Pandora's box and been unafraid to look inside.

Perhaps the most important insight that threads throughout this collection is that women have often been expected to safeguard the "purity" of the ethnic group and transmit its culture, while men are permitted more active roles. This idea has not been widely discussed in North America, but its implications for this continent deserve attention.

It is not hard to see why women might be attracted to the central, though ultimately limiting, status of guardian-of-the-race. Dubravka Zarkov, a cultural anthropologist, argues in her essay "Gender, Orientalism and the History of Ethnic Hatred in the Former Yugoslavia" that the roles of mourning mother and rape victim are of paramount strategic importance to the war in the former Yugoslavia. Attempts to deal with ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, one may then conclude, must address the psychological appeal of nationalism. Rape and mourning have generally been confined to the margins of society. By according these issues a major role in the maintenance of group identity, nationalists validate women's experiences. By basing men's sense of self-worth on their power as protectors of house and home, nationalists reinforce longstanding notions of masculinity. Those who oppose the Balkanization of the Balkans need to challenge these traditional gender roles before they can count on lasting peace in the region.

The problems that women face are, of course, not simply psychological but also structural. In her essay "Young People: Nationalism, Racism and Gender," the psychologist Ann Phoenix discusses a study that she conducted in the early 1990s of a group of Londoners aged 14 to 18. She found that fewer young women than young men said they were loyal to Britain or their parents' country of origin. Perhaps women felt a weaker tie to nation because of their historical experience of discrimination and disenfranchisement.

Phoenix's study suggests to me that allegiance to the black community may replace patriotism among some women of African background in Britain. "Black young women," she writes, "were less likely than any other 'race'/gender group that we interviewed to say that they would be prepared to marry or cohabit with people of other colors, even while such black-white relationships are increasing in Britain." Perhaps black identity compensates young women of African descent for their comparative disadvantages in the United Kingdom by giving them an important function: protecting the concept of blackness.



Crossfires: Nationalism, Racism and Gender in Europe
Edited by Helma Lutz, Ann Phoenix and Nira Yuval-Davis
Pluto Press
196 pp., $19.95

If women are often employed by nationalists to maintain cultural traditions—and thus to mark the boundary between us and "the other"—the challenge for leftists and feminists is to provide women with more

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rewarding social roles. True, nationalism gives them more symbolism than substance. Socialists and social democrats need to offer a more appealing alternative.

Philomena Essed's contribution to *Crossfires* describes cross-ethnic networking by women in Europe—a phenomenon that the left should be more engaged in and encourage. Regional associations as well as ties between migrants from Africa, Asia and the Caribbean have been established. More recently, minority women's groups have reached out to new refugees. "The political implications," Essed notes, "are that women, through their own initiative, develop strategies to prevent different kinds of migrants (labour migrants, migrants from the former colonies, economic and political refugees) being played off against one another."

The tendency today is to define oneself by one's status vis-à-vis Europe: Are you a citizen of a nation in the European Union? Do you have a temporary residence permit or refugee status? Or are you an illegal immigrant? By forging alliances that cross those categories, women can work against the Europeanism that is emerging as a new form of nationalism as the European Union consolidates itself.

The exclusionary ideology of the European Union—with its fortress mentality that regards the entry of people from elsewhere with great suspicion—is worrisome. The editors of *Crossfires* should have further investigated the last word in their subtitle, "Nationalism, Racism and Gender in Europe." The very concept of "Europe" needs to be questioned. Its borders are arbitrary, shifting due to political and economic rather than geographical considerations. Does it extend as far as Serbia, Turkey or Russia? That depends on who is in power in those places. Does it cross the Channel? That depends on whom you ask.

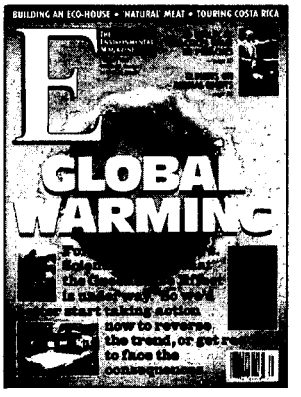
The positive values that emerge from *Crossfires* are "transnational" and "transethnic," although the meaning of those terms still remains vague. Gloria Wekker attempts to fill out those concepts in her essay "'After the Last Sky, Where do the Birds Fly?': What Can European Women Learn from the Anti-Racist Struggles in the United States?" After experiencing the denial of racism in the Netherlands and the "accommodation, silent discontent, dropping out" of minority communities there, she is heartened by increasing demands for ethnic studies programs and for more faculty and students of color in the United States. She notes, however, that Americans tend to treat ethnicity as a matter of psychology and folklore rather than of history or economics. Comparative, cross-cultural perspectives such as those found in this collection are useful—for people on both sides of the Atlantic. ◀

Karen Rosenberg recently returned to the United States after five years in Berlin and Vienna. She writes on cultural history and is completing a novel.

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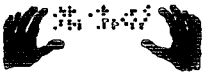
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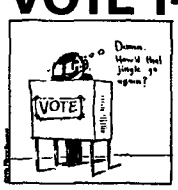
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The partygoers stream into the room through an entryway, where they are offered an array of apolitically political stickers, buttons and paraphernalia. A promotional button for a politics Web site run by the *Washington Post* is connected to a door prize, which means everyone is wearing one. From a distance, it looks as if the buttons read "Vote for Politics." This seems appropriate.

So everything moves along much as you'd expect it would in a room full of free beer and after-work ex-frat kids. People drink. People schmooze. Cards change hands. When pressed by interloping reporter types, some people profess great admiration for Rock the Vote and the work it does. Some—particularly Republicans—express great confidence that MTV's voter registration by benefit-concert approach will help them out come election time. But most of them don't even bother. Instead, they pick through the sushi and sausages, and have fun. But the responses are on cue when the crowd is addressed by their powerhouse hosts, the head of the College Democrats (Republicans, boo!; Democrats, cheer!) and the head of the College Republicans (Democrats, boo!; Republicans, cheer!).

They get a chance to do it again when the guests of honor, Reps. Dick Gephardt and John Kasich, take the mike. Their speeches, of course, are indistinguishable, full of praise for voting and participating and youth and enthusiasm and "issues," whatever those may be. And beer. The fellows then exit, stage right, back to the VIP room (the high school dance analogy continues: the chaperones have a room where they can retreat). The stage is turned back over to the evening's main entertainers, the Amendments, a band of five Republican representatives who charge ably through classic-rock standards—"Mustang Sally," "Brown-Eyed Girl," "Takin' Care of Business." "Who'd have thought Congress could play Bachman Turner Overdrive!" exclaims cigar-smoking think-tank employee Adam Mierer.

MTV's "Choose or Lose" bus was advertised as the main attraction of the evening. But by the time it finally rolls in, it's clear that no measly bus stands a chance against an evening of Capitol Hill scamming. It's too bad, because for people who aren't going to get lucky tonight, the vaguely psychedelic daze conjured up by the bus might be the next best thing. With six wheels and just as many shades of red, white and blue, it is a 110-foot rolling billboard for democratic hipness. Liberally sprinkled with pro-participation exhortations by everyone from George Santayana to George Foreman, the bus aims to succeed not so much by showing the power of the vote as by showing the powerful people who vote. Or at least say they do. Or at least say something that sounds sort of like it's about voting. Needless to say, those being quoted—Run DMC, Fiorello La Guardia and Ben Bradley (sic), among others—run the widest possible gamut of ages, races, genders and professions. The quotations appear in a variety of font sizes. I'm not quite sure what is meant by the notion of postmodern pastiche, but I think this must be it.

Even if there's no MTV excitement, there is major intrigue between sips of microbrews. It seems the Republican attendees have done a much better job of showing up with political stickers than their Democratic archrivals. The Republicans are out in force, dispensing blue "Dole" stickers to any and all. Some witty Democrats have countered by rearranging the letters on the GOP stickers from D-O-L-E to O-L-D-E. Others have panicked. "My friends had to call for stickers," says William Smith, who is wearing a Democratic "Win in 96" sticker.

Camp Clinton seems to have responded with a rush delivery. It's not clear why it matters who wears what stickers in a scene where everyone's loyalties are already declared. But amid the beer and Republican rock, the machinations go on.

It is in those machinations that the key lies, ultimately, to understanding the young Washington politicos and MTV's hype-tech operators. For the whole deal to work—Beltway politics, the congressional staffer professional ladder and Rock the Vote—the illusion must be created that somewhere, somehow, there are thousands and thousands of "grass roots" people marching to and fro, confronting each other, fighting for the cause. And so here in the beer-aided comfort of political careerist Washington, the very people who know better than anyone else that the whole Choose or Lose gig is just a pantomime nonetheless act out a simulacrum of politics for themselves.

What are the stakes? For the participants this evening, they can hardly be which team wears more buttons. A self-definitional game is going on, too. As the differences blur ever more between Clinton and Dole, and between Democrats and Republicans, illusions of action, passion and gravitas are all the more important as far as the meaning of the partygoers' lives is concerned.

And for the culture-meisters of MTV, it may well be the same thing in reverse. In the entertainment industry, relevance is a priceless commodity. On Choose or Lose specials, video footage of speechifying political types and concern-expressing young'uns extends the cable network's reach into a region of life deemed by someone else to be relevant. It all happens here—slam-dancing and participatory democracy. The distinctions fade. And even if the wonkish TV segment costs a lot of money or doesn't get good ratings, it creates the illusion of drama. And that sells.

Like the Young Democrats and Young Republicans, moving through a choreographed faux-politics dance, Choose or Lose asks us to rock the vote without asking who wrote the song. On TV—where the network, after being criticized for a pro-Clinton slant, is now on its best bipartisan behavior—and at the fundraiser, where twentysomethings swill non-partisan beer, the music may not always be House Republicans playing BTO. But in this realm, politics is but play-acting and the song is still called takin' care of business. ◀

Mike Schaffer is a freelance writer based in Washington, D.C.

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MTV "rocks the vote" without creating waves

By Mike Schaffer

A giant banner flying outside the new Capital City Brewing Co. just two blocks from the Capitol reads "Give Us Liberty or Give Us Beer!" Inside, however, there doesn't seem to be much choice about it: With an open bar and a wide variety of trendy beers on tap, liberty tonight is no match for a brewski.

That's not to say that liberty, as well as related concepts like freedom, equality and justice, aren't getting a lot of airtime. At the Washington benefit for the MTV cheerleader-for-democracy movement "Rock the Vote," earnest platitudes flow like water. Unfortunately, as the sign maintains, this is a beer crowd.

These are the political leaders of tomorrow. Shelling out $19.96 each, a sellout crowd that just might include every single ex-student council president in Washington has trooped over from their congressional staffer jobs to the party. They have come to join the chairs of the College Democrats and College Republicans of America, plus a wide variety of important ex-officio honorary sponsor types, to raise money for a truly worthy cause: corporate entertainment giant MTV. More specifically, their entry fee (all of it, since a variety of corporate givers like the Washington Post Co. and Coca-Cola are footing the event's bill) will help the music-video channel send its next generation of Tabitha Sorens around the country and across the cablescape, scaring up voters, activists and believers in democracy.

IN THE END

But if you've come to the benefit, as I have, expecting to find easily lampooned MTV activism, you're in for a major disappointment. Rock the Vote may wax Jeffersonian before its target audience of glazed-eyed Beavises and Smashing Pumpkins-addled Butt-Heads, but back where politicos have the home field advantage, there's brutal honesty. As I am told by everyone from the College Republican with the "Families for Dole" sticker to the don't-quote-me guy who also confides that there are a lot of cute boys here, "It's a huge party!" It's a party that's pretty detestable from the git-go. By 5:30, the scene is abuzz with what look like dozens of clean-cut kids—boys with flannel shirts and ties, a sprinkling of white baseball caps. Like members of the social committee before the high school dance, they put the finishing touches on the room. Some young Republicans nail up a College Republicans poster. Classic rock blares: MTV may be the evening's cause célèbre, but music-wise we're back in the eight-track era. Or, at least, that hit of the eight-track era that was re-released on CD when Reagan was president.

That's not to say other '90s protocols aren't being observed. You're as likely to get a Budweiser here as you would be at a Mormon retreat. And there's a touchy-feely quality to the partygoers' conception of politics that could only hail from the Clinton era. Even the Dole supporters in the crowd would no doubt be well-prepped to answer the memorable MTV boxers-or-briefs question on their man's behalf.

But the question never comes up. This is largely because everyone knows the answer—that is, because everyone is already committed to one party or the other. "Oh, yeah, everyone here is political," says Dole campaign youth director Corey McDaniel, who sits at a table covered with Republican stickers. He estimates that the crowd is evenly divided between members of Team Clinton and Team Dole, though other than the occasional button there's little way of telling them apart among the sea of white faces.

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